

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS



C. MAUCLAIR

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THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

THE
GREAT FRENCH
PAINTERS

AND THE EVOLUTION OF FRENCH PAINTING
FROM 1830 TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY
CAMILLE MAUCLAIR



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TO
M. LÉON BOURGEOIS

PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

YOU, SIR, ARE THE MOST INTELLECTUAL AND THE MOST FAMILIAR WITH GENERAL
IDEAS OF THE STATESMEN WHOM THE PRESENT REPUBLIC HAS COUNTED AMONG
ITS GOVERNMENT; YOU HAVE BEEN (AND MAY YOU SOON BECOME AGAIN)
THE MOST LIBERAL AMONG ITS MINISTERS OF FINE ARTS. KNOWING
HOW DEEPLY YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE CAUSE OF FRENCH
ART BEFORE FOREIGN NATIONS, I RENDER YOU NO MORE
THAN JUST HOMAGE IN BEGGING YOU TO ACCEPT
THE DEDICATION OF A BOOK IN WHICH
I HAVE SPOKEN OF MEN WHOM
YOU HAVE LOVED AND
DEFENDED.





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NOTE

THE illustrations in this volume are partly taken from photographic collections made by various publishers from the works at the Louvre and Luxembourg Galleries, and partly due to the courteous assistance of modern artists. Finally, for all that concerns Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Pissarro and Sisley, I have to thank M. Durand-Ruel, who has been kind enough to place at my disposal his private collection of photographs that are not for sale, as he had already done most liberally in the case of my volume on "The French Impressionists." The example of Monticelli's earlier manner, here reproduced, belongs to the collection of M. Delpiano, of Cannes, who has had it specially photographed for this volume.

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INTRODUCTION

SOME explanation will be necessary to justify the composition of this book. Its programme is vast; it is to compress into a rapid sketch seventy years that have given to the French School some of its greatest masters and an imposing number of artists of high merit. In what spirit, in what order are we to consider them? This, for the sake of clearness, had better be defined at the outset.

Our work commences at the threshold of the Second Romanticism, after the principal works of Delacroix and Ingres, and comes down to the artists of our very day. Let us recall briefly the preceding French evolution and its principal periods. After the realists of the French Renaissance, the Italian School, established at Fontainebleau, introduced its pompous taste, its decorative emphasis, its brilliant decadence. The spirit of the delightful primitives was crushed by that of Raphael, of Paolo Veronese and of Michelangelo; and then this, in its turn, degenerated. The school of Fontainebleau was imbued with the spirit of Rosso, of Primaticcio, of the Carracci, of Guido Reni, until later it sank to the level of Bernini and Albani. From that epoch the French tradition was sacrificed to official favouritism which did homage to the Italians. This state of things reached its climax under Louis XIV. with the foundation of the *Ecole de Rome*. The “grand century” militarized art, and from that date the independents and the truly national painters were doomed to poverty and obscurity, to the detriment of the docile students who were forced into neo-Greek aesthetics and allegorical art. In opposition to Lebrun, to Le Sueur, to Mignard,

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to Vanloo, to the Court portrait painters, for two hundred years a Poussin, a Chardin, a Watteau, a Largillière and a Fragonard represent, with varying fortunes, the French lineage, and if they did not vegetate like Chardin, they were not destined to attain to anything higher than the dignity of "small masters." The *Ecole de Rome* and the direction of the *Beaux-Arts* had meanwhile become regular privileged corporations, decreeing a code of art and applying it with proud conviction and rigour. Eighteenth-century painting acquired more life, more truth, than the art of the seventeenth century, but it preserved at least the obligatory "nobility" of allegorical subjects. It only profited by the evolution of ethics to abandon pompous subjects and to mix with the allegories—of which love is the principal theme of amusing observations—modern costumes and a light fancy, in which the French spirit reappears in spite of all. This spirit shook off all fetters at the terrible end of a gallant century, penetrated into the sphere of psychology, and invented the art of illustration with Boilly, Saint Aubin, the two Moreaus and Debucourt. We might imagine that the time of the Revolution would have witnessed the bursting into bloom of an art similar to our free impressionism: the triumph of French taste over Italian taste, which had been made official by an autocratic government. But the Consulate and the Empire sprang into being, and Napoleon's imperious spirit, enamoured of discipline and of the Roman hierarchy, raised the School and its dogmas higher than ever. Military glory impelled the painters to rise to severe subjects. If the Imperial epopee found in Gros and Gérard its fine painters of war-scenes, the desire to glorify Roman history created, on the other hand, the most offensive, trite compositions. It requires all the genius revealed by certain portraits, all the skill and knowledge of the *Coronation at Notre-Dame*, to make one forgive Louis David his *Sabines* and his *Leonidas*, and particularly the crowd of mediocrities encouraged by this fatal example of false

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idealism and false purity of line. The greatest prejudices were then at their height: the Napoleonic spirit was essentially anti-artistic and served as pretext for works worse even than the official works of the seventeenth century. That was the moment, perhaps, when national painting was most completely forsaken, and the case was the same with literature.

But after 1815, after the great crises, in the time of the Restoration, when so much enthusiasm was at work, so many passions and dreams, the wealth of blood, which had ceased to be absorbed by war, found its way again into the realm of thought. Romanticism developed, to burst forth in 1830. All at once a grand, free and eloquent art sprang into sight. It seemed as though French painting were awakened after heavy sleep, during which Prudhon, the enigmatical, had been the only link between the past and the new centuries. Delacroix appeared—a colossus who carried pictorial romanticism on his own shoulders, as Hugo carried literary romanticism. A new world was created. The effect was so startling that the School tried in dismay to find in itself a principle capable of saving it, and was fortunate enough to find Ingres. These two great masters were at that moment the incarnation of the two hostile principles. Delacroix was the re-awakening of French instinct, inspiration, fire, heroic realism; Ingres, the preservation of the neo-Greek tradition, cold-blooded knowledge and minute perfection. But Ingres, with all the triteness of his allegories and the narrowness of his ideas, revealed in his portraits a beauty infinitely superior to the precepts of the School, and a soul entirely French. He is the very example of what a great nature can accomplish in spite of indifferent theories, and in future the degenerate School was to make unfair use of his name. But, after all, though Ingres's influence might rally all the partisans of academic art, happy to intrench themselves behind his incontestable genius, Delacroix's example raised against the School an irresistible coalition of romantic independents; and from him dates the great

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struggle of the nineteenth century, the determined revolt against authority, against the ideal, against formalism and the very existence of an official School of Art.

Thus it is that we may sum up the whole evolution, the heads and periods of which are to be treated in this volume. The realism of the second romanticism, and, later, modernity in art, are the offspring of Delacroix's first romanticism, of *heroic realism* and *modern tragedy*. The century has witnessed divisions between the classicists and the romanticists, first from a purely aesthetic point of view; and then, from a moral and sociological point of view, between the officials and the independents. The artist's condition has changed since the Revolution. The artist of yore was a kind of purveyor of luxuries, attached to the great nobles, and had therefore, for the sake of success, to conform to the rules of his corporation: hence the rigorous hierarchy of the School that kept the secrets of the beautiful in custody and had the official mission to teach them. And it would be difficult to imagine to what a point this rigour had been pushed: the example of the studios of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* to-day can only give a feeble idea of it. Woe to the independent of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who dared to show originality of vision, or a striving after modern reality! He was sure to be evicted and relegated to play the part of an artisan or a workman. The conception of "noble" art creates a deep gulf between the maker of pictures or statues and the artisan who creates such furniture, jewellery, or glass, as we find to-day a thousand times more beautiful and significant than these works of the School. But with the Revolution the artist became a free citizen, living by his work. This social transformation had certain grave consequences. The artist changed his master. In the place of the great noble who paid well and did not argue, the artist had to deal with the middle-class patron, who paid badly and pretended to be an expert. From this point of view the artist

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gained nothing by his new condition and became a pauper. But at the same time he began to reflect that there was no longer a *raison d'être* for the hierarchy of the School. After 1830 he rose against the *bourgeoisie*. As a matter of fact, from the point of view of material condition he was better pleased with the old *régime*. The aristocracy had permitted the luxury of great decorative works; the commonwealth did not permit it. Besides, morally, an artist can hardly be anything but either an aristocrat or revolutionist. He can never be *bourgeois*. He has a love of luxury and compassion for the poor, and the *bourgeoisie* satisfies neither of these points of view. That is why we see the citizen-artist immediately entering the lists against the triumphant Third Estate, and this explains the revolutionary attitude of all the great artists of the nineteenth century, from Delacroix to Daumier, Courbet and the draughtsmen of the day.

The artist, in consequence, waxed indignant over official art teaching, an altogether aristocratic institution that had no further *raison d'être* in a democratic country. The *bourgeoisie*, on the other hand, not liberal by any means, but most anxious to take the place of the Kings, maintained the State institutions and proposed to continue to raise through them artists to celebrate its reign, without, however, bestowing the same pensions and favours on those who agreed to accept the office. It naturally followed that the liberated citizen-artist, who had to live at his own risk, revolted against such pretension, and desired at least, in exchange for his poverty, to say what he pleased and as he pleased. This was the situation created at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as soon as the Napoleonic yoke had ceased to weigh down the conscience. Together with liberty there awoke the desire of finding again the national tradition which monarchy had almost broken off in favour of Italian taste. The feeling of a modern ideal, logically connected with the former French ideal, was developing. The *Ecole de Rome* appeared to the

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feverish generation of Delacroix as the symbol of despotic obscurantism. It was this generation that began to remember the Gothics, the School of Burgundy, Fouquet, Clouet, and all who had been dethroned and sacrificed by the irruption of the Italians who came with Francis I. and with the Medici. And then, at last, it was this generation that determined to go back to these distinguished ancestors and to ask them for the secret of the national style.

Meanwhile Ingres, the last incarnation of a glorious past, was teaching that absolute, logical beauty, the only real beauty, was with the Greeks and with Raphael. Ingres loved neither the Byzantines, nor the primitives, nor the Flemings and Germans; and in his time the Gothic artists of France were scarcely known. Ingres was a great artist, who loved the Greeks and the great Italians with acute discernment and nobility of mind; but his influence and his ideas have been harmful in so far as the School has interpreted them with ever increasing narrow-mindedness. It is known that personally Ingres was hypochondriacal, convinced that he alone held the secret of aesthetic truth, and absolutely and systematically hostile to the conception of a progressive ideal. But his genius as painter has obliterated the stains of his uncompromising disposition. Ingres has been violently attacked by the romanticists and realists. To-day the very men whom he would have loathed—Degas, Besnard, Renoir, Carrière—proclaim their admiration for him in unmistakable language, precisely because they have recognized in him a pictorial genius of far more interest than all his theories. In their eyes Ingres should be detached from the mediocrities who cling to his ideas without having his gifts. We shall examine in detail these adepts of Ingres's academic methods. For the moment we shall only lay stress on a very important fact which has hardly been noticed by the public, but which seems to be becoming more and more the foundation of all the new criticism of French art: that the development of the genius of

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French painting was arrested by the unfortunate work of the monarchy and of the academic spirit; a fact which finds its set-off in the struggle of the whole nineteenth century to destroy this work. To establish this truth is the duty of the criticism of to-day, because it lies at the bottom of the consciousness of the best modern painters, and because criticism should reflect this consciousness, which creates the art of a period. It is the establishment of this truth that will be a lucid guide through the study of all the movements that have taken place since Delacroix. A visit to the Louvre suffices to bring it home forcibly. If you go, for instance, to the mediaeval and Renaissance sculpture rooms; if you see works of genius, like the tomb of Philippe Pot, Germain Pilon's Virgin, and Jean Goujon's nymphs, not to speak of the work on the Gothic cathedrals; and if you then see the insipid allegories inspired by Jean de Bologne and the Frenchified Italians of the seventeenth century, you get the impression of a disastrous decadence. You see the prodigious genius of Puget resisting even the neo-Greek precepts which thwarted his impulse, and the liberation of Houdon's nervous grace. When you get to Rude, one of the greatest sculptors of all times, you become aware of a chain connecting him, across two centuries and a half, with Germain Pilon. When you have seen all this, and when you think of Auguste Rodin's recent works, you can only say that this marvellous artist, who appears to many an exceptional phenomenon, finds his real greatness in the fact that he is simply a Frenchman conscious of his race, and free from scholastic prejudices: the figures of the tomb of Philippe Pot might be by Rodin. The same observations will result from a visit to the picture galleries. And, finally, attentive study of the Greeks will demonstrate how widely they have been misunderstood by the Academicians. The majority of the works extolled as models in the studios of the School are Latin rather than Greek, and Greek art is neither congealed, nor pompous, nor "noble" in the emphatic and icy

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sense that has been given to this word. It is realistic, full of life and movement. Ruled by canons, it yet knows how to shake off these fetters, when occasion arises. It is sensual and supple; and one is filled with amazement to see the degenerated successors of the great Ingres claim such masterpieces as their justification for painting their insipid, feeble works, which are ruled by a false idea of perfection. They merely parody an admirable originality.

Unfortunately it is none the less true that the middle ages and the French Renaissance are only referred to with contempt at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*.¹ These splendid works are quoted as curious, semi-barbaric documents of almost exclusively archaeological interest, the faults of which afford amusement. It is in these terms that French marvels of absolute skill are qualified and quickly put aside in favour of the example of Italy. And the Italian primitives themselves are spoken of in the same way! In the eyes of the professors all these creations are only praiseworthy or interesting tentative efforts before the “grand epoch,” and, thus understood, the Renaissance may well be said to become hateful: it becomes synonymous with the systematic stifling of national genius, especially in France, where we have only known its second degenerate line—Primaticcio and not Raphael. Reflecting on all these things, we have the intuition of an immense and fatal misunderstanding. And this is raised beyond all doubt when we see the amazing appreciations by the classic critics of the “awkwardness,” “the barbaric naïveté” of the primitives, the Flemings, of Dürer, of Rembrandt himself, who was so far from academic; when we see all the schools of Europe practising the same receipts for the benefit of the same ideal of canonical beauty derived from certain Greek and Italian works, carefully rejecting

¹ During the five years of his tenure of office, Gustave Moreau scandalized his colleagues by speaking respectfully of that period, and on his death the traces of this influence were speedily effaced.

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those that might be contradictory, and raising this ideal as a barrier of discouragement against all who wish to find the expression of their own epoch and do not believe art to be a thing incapable of progress and fixed, once and for all, by the Greeks or by the fifteenth century.

By beginning this book immediately after Ingres and Delacroix, or at least after their great, significant works (for they lived until the middle of the nineteenth century), we shall take up the French School at the moment when the great question has been clearly put, when the schism is about to take place, when, delivered from the autocratic *régime*, and free to follow his own initiative, the French artist will boldly face the tyrannical ideal that has been imposed upon him; when, on the other hand, academism, upheld by the *bourgeoisie*, will have to justify by its own worth the part it wishes to continue playing. It is the merit of Ingres and Delacroix to have made this situation clear by producing works which absolutely define the two roads to be followed. The one clings to the past, believing that the Greeks and the Italians have found perfection and that degeneration would be the result of not following their example. The other encourages the new artist to believe that the masters were great only because they were original, and that he should honour them, not by copying them, but by searching in his turn for the beauty of the age to which he belongs. The new artists do not deny that Greek art had contained the germ, if not the complete realization, of all sculpture, just as Sebastian Bach may be said to have foreseen all music. But they combat the idea that Greek sculpture should impose upon painting its ideal of the nude, its allegorical subjects, and its canons. They also combat the idea that the primitives, with all their genius, their form, their world of impressions, are simply the basis of Raphael and of Michelangelo. They claim for art the right of nationality and honour the Gothics, the Burgundian School, Pilon, Goujon, Clouet, as the initiators of pure autochthonal tradition. They protest against a

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code of aesthetics based upon an immutable conception of the beautiful, a conception that was fixed for ever at the Renaissance, and imposes upon the living an art which is no longer consistent with their psychology. Finally, they rise vehemently against the preconceived idea of a "decadence" beginning with a certain epoch, and they proclaim this idea to be false, discouraging and unworthy of art itself: for them the decadence is the very result of the hypnotism exercised by the works of the dead.

The entire nineteenth century will be a response to the problem, and we shall examine its solution with all its qualities and faults. We shall see how, through historical criticism, the knowledge of Greek ideas and culture which give so new an aspect to Greek statuary, will come little by little to be defined. We shall see this same criticism contribute a precious page to the comprehension of the arts by revealing to us the primitives and the middle ages, hitherto so little known, and by doing justice to their pretended "barbaric awkwardness." We shall see the French realists rise against the School, and create masterpieces without obeying its precepts, whilst the School itself degenerates more and more. We shall see how Corot, Courbet, Millet, Manet, Besnard and Degas contest the prestige of pseudo-classicism, reverse the parts, become the real upholders of tradition, and affirm that the scholastic ideal is composite, illogical, contrary to the lessons taught by history, and has no right to rule national taste and to keep the monopoly of French genius. We shall finally see how the notion of the *beauty of proportions* gives way to that of the *beauty of character*, and how the notion of *teaching* art is transformed and gives way to the *intuitive* qualities, to personal vision and to personal invention of methods of expression.

Such, in bold outlines, is the evolution which criticism, whether it approve of it or deplore it, cannot refuse to acknowledge, because it is history itself.

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But this evolution has not taken place by clearly defined, successive steps. And this leads me to explain clearly to the public the motives which have guided me in the composition and the arrangement of the chapters. It is my duty to insist upon this very important point, if only to forestall certain objections which are sure to be raised in good faith.

It seems, first of all, that the most natural division would be that of chronological sequence. It would have been easy enough to follow it; yet I have not adopted it. I have considered it preferable to proceed differently, and to divide this vast *ensemble* not according to schools or to periods, but according to subject.

I think it incumbent on me to say at once that I attribute no absolute value to any of these three kinds of division. They are arbitrary. It is puerile to state that a school is born at such a moment and ceases at such another: that is disproved by facts. Evident affinities can be found between one artist and another who has preceded him by sixty years, and logically both should be placed in the same period. As regards schools, this word still had a precise meaning at a time when the arts were subject to a corporative system, when generations of *masters* living in some province, without rapid and easy means of communication, produced works on the spot according to the spirit of their soil. With the conditions of modern life, the easy exchange of ideas and intellectual cosmopolitanism, schools have become impossible: there are only temperaments united by free sympathy, by the circumstances in which they are placed and especially by the identity of the impressions they produce upon the public. Their centre is no longer a set of rules, a principle, but an idea. And principles, being settled things, soon grow decrepit, whilst ideas live and move. It is the idea that dominates, modifies, and renews the principle, whilst the latter, so far from renewing, can only impede the idea in its perpetual development. These are the moral reasons for adopting a division according to sub-

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jects, rather than schools. But there are also material reasons, especially in the case of the nineteenth century; and I must explain why I have not adhered to the chronology of the periods.

The nineteenth century has been terribly restless and confused in its aspirations. It is not a calm century that lives on one conception and develops it harmoniously: it is a century that rejects an entire artistic organization and an entire ideal, and then searches for others. Its tentative efforts are manifold and contradictory. We can clearly discern certain great movements which follow one upon the other: romantic landscape, realism, the art of intimism, the art of modern observation. But we must note this well; these movements only *seem*, from a distance, to succeed each other. In reality they are parallel. Between 1830 and 1900 a number of artists can be found who live very long lives, and survive the movement in which they are placed by chronology. Ingres died in 1863, when Manet was already known and being discussed. Rousseau died when impressionism was already in full activity. And yet Ingres and Rousseau belong to the beginning of a century which is closed by Manet and his friends. Creators like Millet and Corot remain in the marge of all movements. The Barbizon School seems to be placed in the days of romanticism: in reality it went on producing until after 1870. I could adduce further examples to prove clearly that chronology is a very inexact notion, especially as regards the history of the nineteenth century. From a distance public opinion generally believes that it sees a succession of men who really lived side by side. Where, then, is the advantage of adhering to the course of the years, since these years have witnessed the simultaneous creation of contradictory movements?

If the advantage does not appear to me very clearly, I am, on the other hand, forcibly struck with a great inconvenience, the confusion that must result if I am bound to speak at one and the same time of all

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these parallel movements, simply because the dates demand it. A chronological division would force me to mention in helter-skelter fashion the very dissimilar men who happen to exhibit in the same years. Is it not more logical to group, from one end of the century to the other, those men who have pursued an identical form of ideal? The very object I have in view favours this method. I do not, in fact, pretend to give the public in these pages a complete history of French painting in the nineteenth century. I only hope to show clearly, how, above this throng of artists, many of whom would deserve a volume to themselves, certain great general preoccupations have been manifest and destined to give the century its physiognomy. These preoccupations have had certain results: I shall endeavour to write the history of these results rather than the history of the painters themselves; and, therefore, since these results have found expression through the different *genres*, it is only natural that the *genres*, the subjects, should serve as headings for my chapters. It is natural that each of these chapters should be, so to speak, a little book, relating what realism, orientalism, or any other *genre* has been during seventy years of French pictorial activity, and that the reader may thus find gathered in groups the men who have shared the same ideas, instead of having to hunt them up through a labyrinth of dates which, as regards artistic evolution, do not always coincide with truth.

These are the motives for the division I have adopted, which is necessitated by the very object of my book: the evolution of French pictorial ideas, which is inseparable from the work and the example of the great masters who have handed them down. Thus I shall speak in succession of the landscape painters, from the period of romanticism to the present day, of the theories and works of the academic painters, of the realists and the "characterists," including the illustrators, of the portrait painters, the orientalists, the symbolists, the idealists and

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historical painters, the impressionists, the intimists, and finally the decorators. Thus, moreover, I shall be in a position to satisfy chronological order as well; for landscape painting has reached its finest development since 1830; academic art is summed up in Ingres at the same period; portraiture saw its best examples at the same time and about the middle of the century; orientalism was the passion of the painters from 1830 to 1860; symbolism and the painting of history based upon exegetic documents have appeared since; impressionism has developed from 1865 to our own day; intimism is the last movement of the young school; and, finally, decorative art has found its most illustrious exponent in Puvis de Chavannes, who terminates the French nineteenth century. I have thus arranged my chapters so as to reconcile the *genres* with the chronological sequence of events.

I shall think myself happy, if, at the close of this book, the reader has been induced to share with me some of my ideas on the evolution of French art; if I have succeeded in showing clearly the phases of its ideal; if, finally, I have inspired him with a love for French art, not by eulogy, but by the impartial exposition of ideas and facts.

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

CHAPTER I

THE ROMANTIC AND THE MODERN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

The origin of French Landscape.—Rousseau, Daubigny, Troyon and the Barbizon school.—Corot and the Virgilian Landscape.—Claude Monet and the study of atmosphere.—Some contemporaries.

AT the moment when romanticism first appeared, landscape painting had been almost abandoned in France. It was considered as unworthy of the “grand style.” The fundamental dogma of the school, that the Beautiful is the result of the perfect proportions of which the human nude is the symbol, resulted in landscape being only at the best admitted as conventional background for the figures. A work of art was an abstract composition, made at the studio, and the study of the open air was not even thought of. It was seen, but nobody dreamt of making it the subject for a picture. The artist was absorbed by the aim of conventionalizing, of arranging, of making pictures pretty or majestic, according to the subject, without any regard to truth! In everything the ancients served as the final models: mythology ruled supreme. And the models were not chosen from among those rare ancient writers who possessed the feeling of Nature, like Virgil or Lucretius. It was to Ovid and his precious affectations that men clung, and thereby only followed the literary fashion of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which saw nothing, noted nothing in Nature, if we except some admirable phrases by La Bruyère; whilst the sixteenth century could boast of Ronsard and La Pléiade, with their knowledge of the beauties of landscape. It is known that the ancients saw nothing in mountains but obstacles, in plains but easy roads, in the sea a danger, and in the forests a source of revenue. They were only receptive to the beauty of ordered gardens. The crisis of Latin-Hellenic imitation which created the Renaissance

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

did not fail to impose upon art this mode of thinking. Yet, whilst Holland—a stranger to the Renaissance, and fascinated by Nature—had her marvellous landscape painters, our Burgundian primitives had also grasped Nature; and later we had had, at the height of the seventeenth century, Poussin, the great decorative landscape painter, who, whilst conventionalizing Nature, knew how to preserve for it its majestic emotion—Poussin, who was attached to the *Ecole de Rome*, but who knew all the same how to keep intact the originality of his genius. We had had Claude Lorrain, a brilliant visionary, a colourist who perceived atmospheric transparency with an intensity that made him the direct and glorious precursor of Turner. We had had Watteau, an exquisite and sad poet, who invented the principle of complementary colours and placed his figures in thrilling surroundings, in lovely twilight. But what were these few exceptions in view of the majority of painters who conceived landscape only as a pompous arrangement or as an insipid pastoral play? Whilst abroad there had been men like Ruysdael and Hobbema, and later Gainsborough and Turner, we had had nothing but false aspects of tapestry, conventionalized in the declamatory fashion of the backgrounds of Italian paintings of the Second Renaissance. Artificial ruins, flowery groves, plumed trees, streamlets with rustic bridges—all these formed a background as far removed from reality as the *bergerades* of *l'Astrée*, of Florian and of the minor poets of gallantry. Even Carle Vernet's beautiful seascapes found no imitators, and it seemed as if the naturalistic genius of the Dutchmen were not even suspected at a time when war took us every moment into the country of a Hobbema and of a Van der Meer. Roman dogmatism blinded the painters; instead of bowing to Nature's own incomparable style, as the primitives had done, they obstinately tried to impose upon her a preconceived style. Thus tragedy still banished the word "dog," unless it was elevated by the epithet "devouring," wrote "charger" for "horse," and, at the beginning of that century, demanded of Alfred de Vigny's "Othello" an elegant metaphor to suppress the word "handkerchief." The same tendency caused the retention of the incredible buffooneries which are gravely set forth in the manuals of art and in the academic courses of the epoch. With singular insolence and superciliousness the seventeenth century corrected and "ennobled" Nature,



Th. Rousseau.

LANDSCAPE.

ROMANTIC AND MODERN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

and the eighteenth, seeing it with a more familiar eye, retained, if anything, only the petty, agreeable aspects. It was the same under the Consulate and the Empire. Even the art of gardening, which the French raised to so high a level, was only an outcome of the Italianized style, and not a single painter had the idea of making from the fairy-like aspects of Versailles a picture of which they should form the sole subject. We have to wait for Gros, under the Empire, to create the grand, tragic landscape which he places behind his *Napoleon at Eylau*. It



CLAUDE MONET
THE PINES

might well be said that romanticism has revived French landscape painting after two centuries of slumber. Through its initiative a class of subject, so despised as to have become almost extinct, has grown into one of the most important of pictorial art.

This reawakening of the feeling for Nature is the characteristic of romanticism. It manifested itself with admirable spontaneity in the German *lieder*, in Lamartine's poetry, and then in Vigny and Hugo. Ingres took no notice of it. Delacroix prefers to paint landscapes of stone, like the *Constantinople* which forms the background for his *Crusaders*, or the dreary perspective of the *Massacre of Scio*; and the

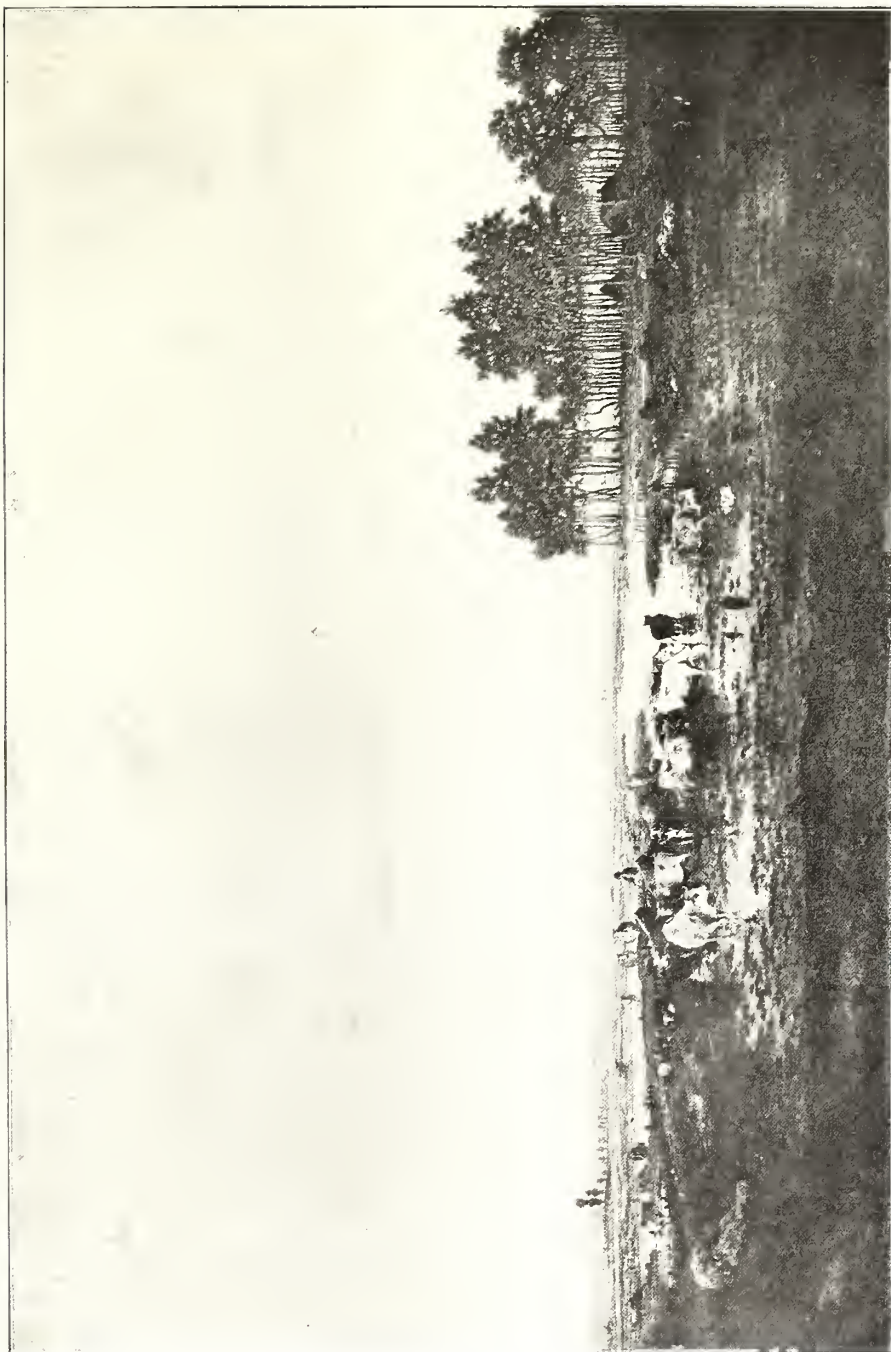
THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

lugubriously powerful seascape of *Don Juan's Barque* makes one regret that he should not have had more frequent occasion to go to grand Nature. But almost immediately, whilst in England Turner creates his unheard-of dreams; whilst Bonington flashes for too short a space, and Constable invents the *landscape in motion*, a school arises in France, which is to give existence to masterpieces.

Théodore Rousseau appears as the first worthy heir of the Dutchmen and of Poussin, and he obeys this double influence. He tries to reconcile the decorative feeling of the great trees of Poussin, Lorrain and Ruysdael, with the precision, the intimacy and the charm of truth of Breughel and Hobbema. He is powerful, broad, and profoundly moved by the grand poetry of trees and horizons. He settles in the midst of the forest of Fontainebleau, where he is joined successively by Daubigny, Diaz and Millet.

Théodore Rousseau's conception of landscape is peculiar. What he sees beyond all in Nature is the drawing of the trees and soil, the very structure of the objects in the landscape rather than the atmosphere by which they are surrounded. Rousseau, it is said, painted his landscapes first and finished by putting in the sky. This is probably true, and this method of proceeding was a remnant of the classic spirit. We must think of the landscape painters of 1830 as simple men; happy in pursuing their quest of Nature, full of curiosity with regard to the details of the forests and farms, loving them in their humble truth, and no longer with the eighteenth-century intention of finding pastoral plays. What stirs Rousseau is the structure of an oak-tree, its robust knots, its roots, the powerful complication of its branches, which Eugène Isabey, the intermediary between the Empire and romanticism, had already been able to see and to love; it is furthermore the aspect of a meadow, the study of the accidents of the soil. He draws them lovingly, with admirable sincerity. He constructs a group of trees with as much care as the Academicians put into the construction of a nude figure. He is marvellously endowed with the gift of expressing the personality of a tree.¹ He is less sensitive to colour. He places his large masses of foliage, his imposing forest boundaries, against skies of a beautiful

¹ The venerable landscape painter, Harpignies, who is responsible for so many strong and excellent works, is still, as regards this point, most worthily carrying on the style of Rousseau.



Th. Rousseau.

LES LANDES.

ROMANTIC AND MODERN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

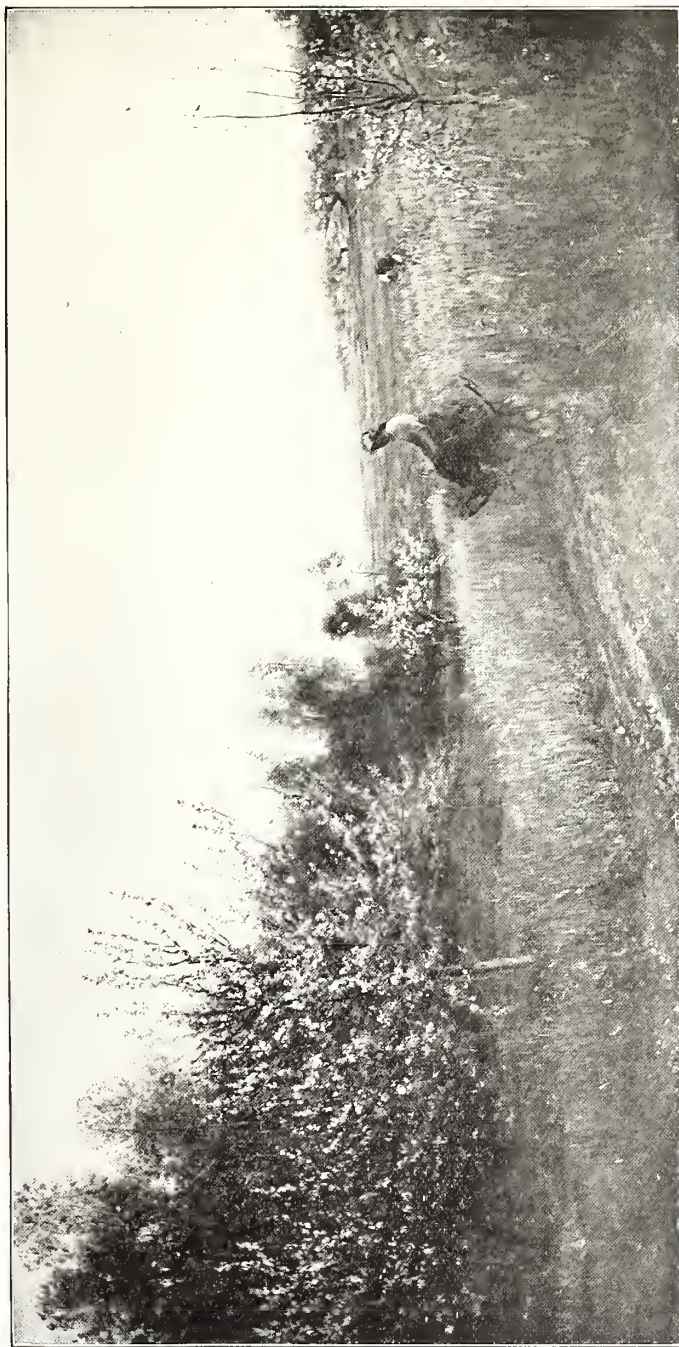
low tone, generally with the light behind, so as to give a uniform tone to the silhouettes and to assert thus their massive and sculptural character. This is also the vision of Ruysdael and of Poussin; but Ruysdael has a far deeper sense of poetry, a far greater feeling for distance, for the mystery of shadows. It is the impression of fecundity, of force, that makes Rousseau a poet, and for this he will count in the future not only as the reviver of landscape painting in France, but also as a great visionary of the forms of Nature. His execution is fat, rich and fiery. He searches neither for strange effects of light, nor for unexpected details; he adheres to the grand disposition of Poussin. The *Sunset* at the Louvre well supplies the synthesis of his fine, sincere talent, of his warm and concentrated colouring.

After him Daubigny appears less powerful, but more delicate. He is more taken up by the smaller aspects. He contents himself with a lane along a cornfield, a group of blossoming apple-trees, or a meadow in spring. He is less a romanticist, than an intimist. There is something of Constable in Rousseau, whilst there is rather something of Patinir in Daubigny who is a delightful small master, with a poetry like Lamartine's. He loves to depict the morning atmosphere, effects of pearly colour, the pleasing notes of blossoms on shrubs, and already he heralds Corot and the prepossessions of the impressionists. Chintreuil, though less gifted, pleases by his search for transparency; he loves vast spaces and catches their subtlest shades, or finally confines himself to small, green nooks, which he knows how to render in all their freshness. Diaz finally, a Spaniard, but faithful to French scenes, excels in rendering the depths of woods, the oceans of foliage, the scintillation of half-light through the leaves; and he places in them almost invariably the delicate white trunks of birch-trees, which form the dominating note of his work. His technique sometimes a little recalls that of Turner, and heralds that of Monticelli, who was destined to surpass him. Of all these men Rousseau is the most powerful, the most imposing, but he gave the rest an impulse that was to prove irresistible; henceforth the landscape-painters, notwithstanding the contempt of the School, proceed upon the quest of all the aspects, upon the discovery, so to speak, of their country. The little village of Barbizon, in the forest of Fontainebleau, was to become the object of the devout pilgrimage of a School

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

which was to last to our own day. Here Rousseau and Diaz were to live and Millet to die, poor and almost unknown, before his resurrection to fame. But every district was to see its beauty sung by local artists. Rousseau had already found the theme for several masterpieces in the marshes of the Landes; Diaz had painted his sparkling little blue and white snow scenes in the Pyrenees. Daubigny had rendered Normandy. Troyon revealed himself as at once a painter of landscape and of animals. Of this whole group he is, perhaps, the most direct descendant of such Dutchmen as Potter and Wouwermans. His *Oxen Going to Work* in the pale light of daybreak, and his *Return of the Herd*, at the Louvre, attest a considerable talent. The solidity, the movement, the style of these works are surprising,—works that have no trace left of the romantic, and owe their beauty solely to their learned and energetic drawing, to their golden light and to their rustic truth to Nature. This is no longer the tremulous, pious poetry of Lamartine: it is the modern observation of the country, the observation of Flaubert, and of George Sand's rural novels.

At the same period a but little-known school manifested itself in Provence. The excellent animal painter, Emile Loubon, studied with sincerity and charm the stony places, the bluish hills, the rugged rocks, and the dusty pines of his country. Later he was to be emulated by Auguste Aiguier, a painter of delicate seascapes, by Paul Guigou, by Monticelli and by Prosper Grésy. Meanwhile the school of 1830 found a valuable support in Courbet. Already the desire to note atmosphere more carefully whilst continuing to draw very exactly the material details of the landscape, had become apparent in Courbet's underwoods. The vigorous painter, Harpignies, was to continue to our own day this conception of the design of landscape, this conscientious study of trees and soil grafted on to the study of atmosphere. But we have now reached the moment when romantic and realistic landscape painting were to appear somewhat heavy, dense, and also a little too sombre; for the sake of style Rousseau's pupils affected the keeping of their works in blackish, heavy tones, where the light of the sun could play with difficulty only. Then it was that France was to be enriched by one of her greatest painters: Corot was about to commence the series of his Virgilian poems, to equal Ruysdael, and to touch the height of purest genius.

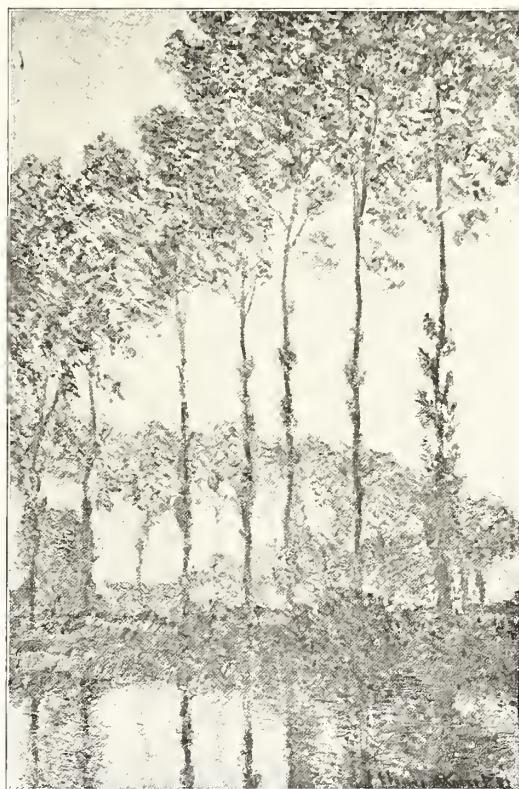


Dautigny.

APPLE-TREES IN BLOSSOM.

ROMANTIC AND MODERN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

He began with a series of studies in the Roman Campagna, inimitably accomplished and correct. Then he contented himself with a cluster of trees, a streamlet, a glimpse of a thinning in the woods, in order to realize his touching and flowing harmonies. All his life Corot was to be abused by the School which upheld against him Cabat and other mediocrities; he lived in poverty, selling his works so badly, that he often offered to throw in some study to the rare buyer whose coming astounded him. This simple and good man, whom his admirers called "father Corot," had infinite delicacy in his soul. He too gives style to Nature in the fashion of Ruysdael, Poussin, and the romanticists, but he only simplifies the colouring to make one feel still more the fluidity of the air which envelops all things. A pearly gray, a bluish green, and some notes of brown, are enough for him to compose a scale, a veritable music of subtle shades. And he introduces into the landscape the notion of the infinite, the mysterious and magnetic vibration of the poetry of pantheism. He is the first to blend the silhouette of a tree with the atmosphere, to suppress the dryness of outlines cut into the sky, and to influence the tones of objects according to the tints of the firmament, and according to the hour. He expresses intensely the mist, the poetry of water, the undefined flight of the distance. Watteau alone before him equalled the elegance of his slender, bent trees, rising sinuously from the soil, with their light, bouquet-like foliage. He often recalls Poussin and Virgil, blending with his landscapes little figures of nymphs and naiads of exquisite

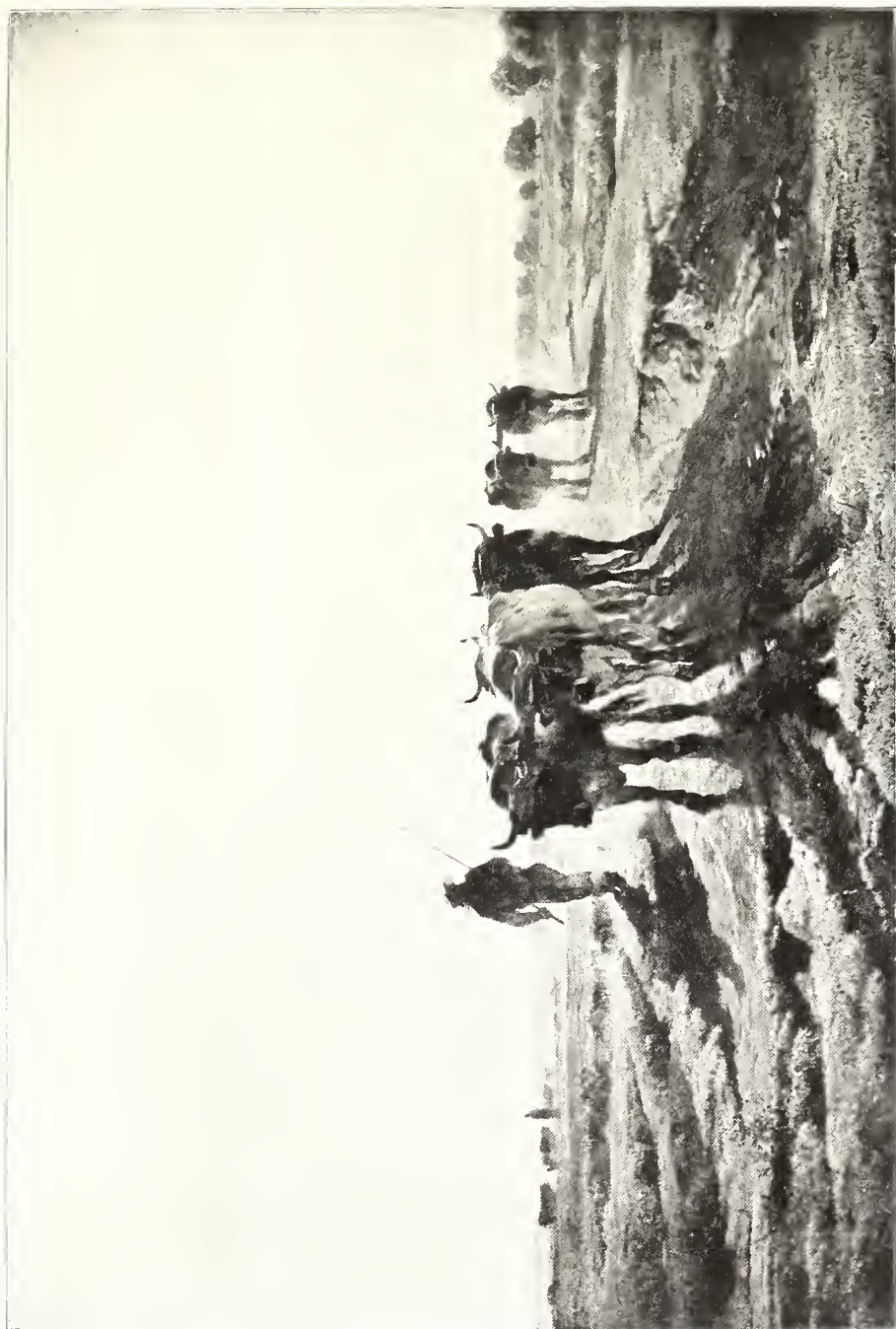


CLAUDE MONET
POPLARS ON THE Epte IN AUTUMN

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

lightness. And this great dreamer of the twilight, this great harmonist of foliage and water, is also an admirable painter of figures. His figures have only recently been noticed, so unjustly has the artist been appreciated. They were the astonishment and the rapture of a man like Degas who knew which are the greatest secrets of design. They count amongst the most beautiful and the most perfect figures that have been painted during the nineteenth century. Corot is one of those men of genius who seem to be the impersonal expression of Nature herself, of the innate poetry of things. In contemplating him, we do not think of technique, but are entirely absorbed by the feeling of tenderness, by the penetrating sensation which he himself has felt. It is only then that we can see the height to which his knowledge of values rose, the masterly sureness of a colourist to whom the greatest difficulties were but play.

With Corot French landscape painting reaches its apogee, and liberates itself at the same time from classicism and the heaviness of the romantic school. With Corot the great principle of modern landscape painting is established: atmosphere becomes the essential and logical theme. It is atmosphere that gives colour and reacts upon all the tones of the picture. It reduces all colours to a *harmony*, of which the sky is necessarily the basis; and thus the landscape approaches the symphonic principle. Corot's work is the starting-point of an evolution that was to lead to a fusion of painting and music. In the great desire of fusing the arts, which was to be the chief pursuit of the end of the nineteenth century, finding its most significant expression in Wagner, Corot's work will have to be reckoned with as having determined the direction of landscape painting towards musical methods; it delivered also a fresh blow to the fundamental notions of the School. One of these notions is, as a matter of fact, that of *local colour*, that is to say, the belief in the individual colouring of objects, whereas in reality, and scientifically, all colour is the result of light, and is modified as light is modified. There are no absolute colours; there are variations and reciprocal influences of colours according to the hour of the day. Shadow is not absence of light, but another form of light, and composed of certain colours. The notion of local colour, the statement that a tree is green or a sky blue, has therefore no reality. It follows, that painting must be considered from an



Tregon.

OXEN GOING TO WORK.

ROMANTIC AND MODERN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

entirely new standpoint.¹ To Corot's efforts is due the very clear position of this question. He was a great musician, and he touches the soul by means analogous to those of music; by rhythm, and by the very subtle development of a dominating tonality and of its issues.

It may be said that Corot has been a profoundly active force, though indirectly, since he proclaimed no theories, and his harmony was not such as can be imitated or begun anew. He was a grand, isolated figure, but he was also the father of the landscape art of to-day. After him I must mention Jules Dupré, who has painted some beautiful pieces, Harpignies, Français, Jules Breton, who, in spite of his rather insipid sentimentality, has painted some interesting and sincere rustic scenes, and, beyond all, two excellent artists, Lépine, the fine observer of Parisian scenes, of quays and old quarters, which he renders charmingly in a pretty, gray and golden harmony; and particularly Eugène Boudin, a veritable modern small master, to whom we owe some admirable seascapes, southern skies of fascinating truth, whose free originality of composition also heralds impressionism. Finally, Corot's soul is resuscitated, with graver melancholy, in a landscape painter whose true place has not yet been acknowledged: Auguste Potelin has for the last twenty years exhibited at the Salons profound and poetical Jura landscapes—his native country—in which he shows, besides an engaging knowledge of the greenish and russet harmonies of this country, a feeling for twilight and diffused light that could be equalled by but a few painters.

Such are the outlines of the evolution of French landscape painting until 1865, an epoch when Claude Monet tried impressionism in his first pictures. From 1870 to 1890 this new vision was to develop and to attain its maturity. We shall make a special study of the technique of this group of artists. But Claude Monet and his friends fall under the heading of this chapter, if only for the choice and style of their subjects. Claude Monet, at the beginning of his career, painted portraits, interiors, and seascapes in a style which recalls Courbet and Manet at the same time. Then his instinct led him to occupy himself with the analysis of light and to consider that this should be the preponderating interest in landscape study. In this respect he forestalled Manet by some years. Through a fortuitous circumstance he gave, quite unintentionally, to

¹ See chapter vii.

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this kind of study the name *impressionism*. At the *Salon des Refusés* of 1863, where the works which had been rejected by the jury were grouped in a few rooms by command of the liberal Emperor, Monet exhibited a sunset, entitled *Impression*, and, in a spirit of raillery, the artists who painted in the manner of this picture were dubbed *impressionists*. It was only after 1870 that Manet began painting in the open air, thus inaugurating the second period of his work. Having long been considered as a man capable of any daring deeds, the butt of controversies, at a time when Monet was still unknown, Manet was soon reputed to be the leader of the innovators, a title which is really Claude Monet's due. Moreover, the altogether fortuitous name *impressionism* was found to present a very acceptable sense: that of an art that only retains the impression of things; and thus this play upon words ended by passing in criticism for the very programme of Monet and his friends.

Monet, then, applied himself to expressing the effects of sunlight upon objects rather than the objects themselves. This was the reverse of romantic landscape. With this intention he painted several series of views from each of which he took fifteen studies on separate canvases, according to the different lights of the day, thus following all the variations of light playing upon the same scene of Nature. Thus he studied successively a hay-rick in a field, some poplars along a river bank, a cluster of trees by the edge of a pool, a village reflected in a river, and finally the portal of Rouen Cathedral. In these different *symphonies*, for this is their true name, Claude Monet showed that he could understand and render the structure of trees or soil, the fluidity of water, or could express the material consistency peculiar to stone; but above all he was interested in the vibration of light. This great painter succeeded in attaining dissociations of tones that had never been observed before. These series of multiple aspects of the same theme are transposed lights, where the hay-rick, the poplars, and the portal are only just a pretext, instead of being, as in Rousseau, the subjects and motives of interest of the picture. But Monet also proved his skill in composition, his knowledge of the various forms of living matter, in his views of the Etretat cliffs, in his Belle-Isle seascapes, in his gardens and pine woods of the Golfe Juan, in which he has rendered so truthfully the soul and brightness of the Mediterranean. Whether he paints the sea as furious

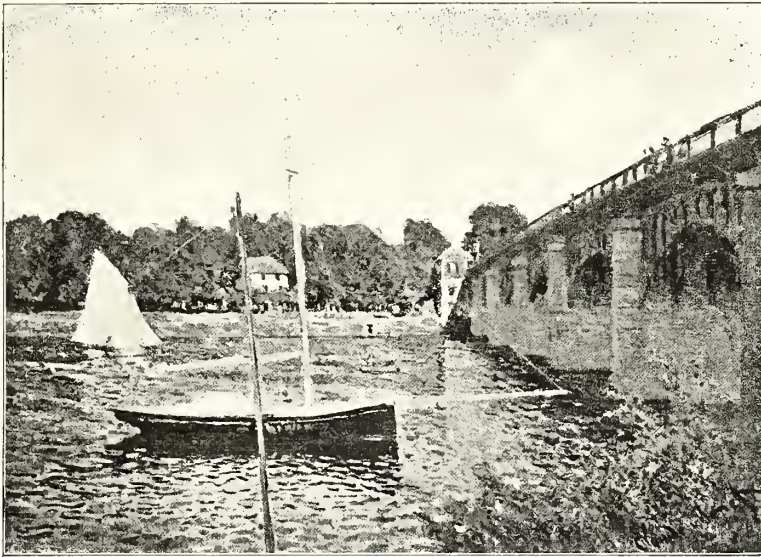


Corot.

MORNING.

ROMANTIC AND MODERN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

and livid, or dissolves it in vaporous blues under the sun, or shows the rude herbage of a cliff bristling under the wind, or pine-trees bent by the fury of a storm; whether he makes red tulip fields shiver under the Dutch breeze, or groups white and pink houses on the banks of a blue and brilliant river; whether he studies snow, rosy hoar-frost, the Seine and her white boats, the Thames and the sun showering gold and silver over the fog, water-lilies, wheat-fields, the rocks of Brittany or the red rocks of Esterel, or again a coastguard's hut, lost on the crest of a dune



CLAUDE MONET
THE BRIDGE AT ARGENTEUIL

facing the boundless sea, or, finally, some pheasants painted like an accumulation of precious stones—Claude Monet always remains lyrical, powerful, subtle and real.

His pictures are beautiful, not only owing to their technique, but also owing to their *mise en cadre*. He renews with infinite changes his manner of presenting a scene, finding in Nature herself the most beautiful decorative principles. Sometimes a stretch of cliff fills a whole canvas, leaving just room for a little bit of sky. Sometimes the sea fills the picture, without any foreground; then again, in the *Cathedrals*, the picture is entirely composed of a fragment of a portal, beginning at the foot of the canvas, and rising to the very top, leaving no sky to be seen.

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

It is like a piece of stone coloured and framed. Monet thus boldly neglects the planes which help towards the understanding of the perspective, the objects or clusters of trees placed apart like the "wings" of the stage. The mere colouring of a rock, or of water suffices to "draw" his pictures — windows opened upon life. Where he composes in more classic manner, he amuses himself with reversing the effects of light, with lighting the first plane and leaving the others in shade, with making his colours play in a thousand variations: in this, notwithstanding his realism, he is related to Turner. It may therefore be said that Claude Monet's composition alone sufficed to inaugurate a new age of landscape art, even if his chromatic theories did not secure him the fame of entire originality. We can count him at the same time with the realists, the impressionists and the lyricists. For his brilliant colouring, his love of light, his intuition as regards the vibration of atoms, and his gift of animating, of making "sing" the smallest bit of earth or water under the sun, rise to a sort of pantheistic joy; he, too, is a poet. Corot wrote the poem of gray tenderness, Monet the poem of the sun, and both are lyricists who might almost be called musical. But with Monet the composition is purely realistic and does not yield, like Corot's, to an obvious preoccupation with the harmonious style of Watteau and of Ruysdael.

Around Claude Monet are grouped some remarkable painters. Camille Pissarro was the most important, the most versatile and the most productive. We owe him a great number of landscapes, of rustic scenes, and, quite recently, a series of Paris studies, in which his talent has reached its apogee, with a force that is astonishing in one of his advanced age. Pissarro began his first landscapes under the distinct influence of Corot. They are peaceful harvest scenes, and views of plains bathed in blonde light. Then, in his markets, his farms, and his studies of peasant women, he was influenced for a long time by Millet. His work has great charm, and reveals a soul sincerely fond of the country, of French orchards, of the silhouettes of humble people. It has a rustic perfume, and belongs to an experienced and conscientious artist. Perhaps Pissarro has suffered from being unable to escape the influence of others: his modest spirit carries him away too easily to imitate what he admires, and it is for this reason that he must be relegated to the rank of the excellent artist of the second order. His recent studies of Paris boule-



Corot.

MORNING.

ROMANTIC AND MODERN LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

wards, seen from high storeys, are admirable as regards correctness, life, atmosphere, and the movement of crowds, and will have to be counted among the best productions of impressionism. As much can be said of Alfred S'sley, who had an exquisite feeling for French skies, for curtains of sunny foliage, for clear rivers, for small country roads, for gay little houses in the midst of gardens, for old churches gilded by the sun, and for grand flights of clouds in the azure, and who has often rivalled Monet. Finally, I must eulogize Cézanne, Lebourg, Gauguin, and the small group of pointillists, whose technique I shall have to refer to again in the chapter on the impressionists.

Manet painted few landscapes. He was beyond all a figure painter. All the same we owe him some beautiful studies of gardens, and some superb seascapes, and in many pictures the landscape backgrounds which are the work of a master, notably that of his *Argenteuil*. Degas's landscapes, as I have said, are more in the nature of experiments in rare tones; but those which serve as backgrounds to his *Race-courses* are very fine. Finally, we shall find Millet again among the intimists. But it is impossible not to mention here his old village churches, which are so simple, true, and subtle, and particularly his amazing *Rainbow*, at the Louvre, which, with its juxtaposition of sun and livid sky, its pale vegetation, and its strange light, is already an impressionist work, with far more colour and vibration than his usual canvases.

The painters of the young generation have all been influenced by impressionism. They seem now to get back to a more decorative conception of landscape, or to intimism, where we shall meet again with some who count among the first artists of the present time. M. René Ménard falls back upon Poussin's tradition of landscape with figures and upon Claude Lorrain's decorative arrangements, whilst, on the other hand, M. le Sidaner, who will be referred to later, seems to modify Claude Monet's technique and to attain a musical subtlety, an emotion of fine shades that transfigures reality. But the majority are still under the direct authority of Monet. With this statement I must close the study of the evolution of French landscape painting, recapitulating its three great phases: that of decorative realism, derived, with Théodore Rousseau, from the tradition of Ruysdael and Hobbema; that of poetic sentiment, born of Corot; and, finally, the study of atmosphere, due to

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

the genius of Claude Monet. Preoccupied at first with rustic details, with the drawing of the objects of Nature, landscape painting turns next towards their moral significance, their soul, their mystery, and finally identifies this soul with light itself, which became the essential concern of painting. Commenced in the studio after sketches from Nature, arranged, composed, landscape art ends by installing itself on a certain spot with fifteen canvases, upon which the artist works in turn, changing them from hour to hour. Conceived at first almost sculpturally, in great, decorative masses, with the intention of giving full expression to the material solidity of wood or rock, landscape painting becomes volatile and fluid, a mere music of colours, a caress of transparent lights, through which we can see the scene serving as pretext, like the theme of a sonata reappearing through its variations. The old idea of the *picturesque*, finding a landscape interesting, if it contains an accumulation of curious details, yields completely to this passionate love of air, brightness, of sunlight and twilight effects. This is the great trait of the history of landscape art from Rousseau to the present day. Thus realism is transformed, reflecting modern sensitiveness in its entirety; and painting is gradually freed of its material character in order to arrive at a kind of comparative immateriality, under the influence of music, which plays the leading part in the history of modern arts.



NEAR ROME.

Cong.

CHAPTER II

THE ACADEMIC PAINTERS

The ideas and dogmas of the School ; their evolution since Ingres.—Formal Beauty ; the cult of the Greeks and of the Renaissance considered as the definite models of art.—The attitude of the School during the century towards innovations.—Scheffer, Hébert, Couture, Cabanel, Bouguereau, Gérôme, Bonnat, Lefebvre, Constant, Carolus-Duran.—The actual position of the School in public opinion.

BEFORE examining the work and the influence of the painters of the School, it will be useful to set forth the general principles of what we call without distinction “academism,” the School, or official painting: for these principles date back to the second Renaissance, and the nineteenth century has witnessed their breaking up rather than their expansion.

The *Ecole de Rome* was founded in the seventeenth century. In reality it responded to a want that arose as far back as the sixteenth century, a period when the painters, sculptors, and architects of the second Italian Renaissance came to France, and, under the protection of the Medici, founded a kind of academy, of which the Fontainebleau School was the prototype. The hierarchic conception of an official body of art-teachers answered well to the desire of an autocracy to monopolize everything. The ideal naturally aimed at by the School was analogous to that of literature, which at that time carried admiration for the Greeks and Romans so far as to consider the “Renaissance” of their cult a necessity, a triumph over the “barbarism” represented by the Gothics and primitives. From this moment an obstinate conception took root: the absolute negation of Christian and Franconian art for the benefit of the “*belles-lettres* and fine arts” derived from Italo-Roman genius, and through it, from Greek genius. Just as the Baron demolished his old fortified castle in order to erect an elegant mansion, and exchanged his battlements, which had become useless under the jurisdiction of the King, for statues, so the middle ages were abandoned, and the Italian

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wars awakened in the French the taste for the smiling palaces of Florence. Italo-Roman taste ruled letters and the arts. Poetry became symbolical. Gongorism and *concetti* ruled at the court of Henry III., and were to be perpetuated in the novels of the seventeenth century, to find their final expression with Florian in the eighteenth century. Similarly pagan symbolism and allegory were to invade decorative painting. Rembrandt and the Dutchmen escaped them, and, what is



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more, passed for boors. But the work of the brilliant and popular Rubens is imbued with them.

Whilst the direct influence of the men of the second Renaissance—emulators or pupils of Raphael, Michelangelo, Donatello, and Lionardo—was in force, this invasion of the Italian ideal did no harm. Botticelli, Fra Angelico, Mantegna, Masaccio and Gozzoli were left in the shade, where they were destined to remain, so to speak, until this century. And, after all, there was still some grandeur in the influence of Primaticcio and Carracci, and the brilliant, decorative genius of Tiepolo was a magnificent example. But the decadence of the Italian School became more pronounced. Inspiration was replaced by clever-

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ness; the pagan Renaissance killed religious inspiration; the grace of Raphael became mawkish in Albani, and the seventeenth century saw a Bernini in the place which had been occupied by Bramante and Michelangelo. However, the prestige of Rome was so great, that it became a custom in France to accept blindly as the very code of beauty whatever came from Italy. Our Gothics had long been considered as barbarians, quaint at the best. The sensibility and genius of the North were not even suspected. Jean Goujon and Germain Pilon, who had been honoured by Francis I. and Henry II., gave way before the throng of sculptors who came in the wake of the Medici. Nobody took the trouble to reflect that among the people there might be national artists worthy of interest. The autocracy, at great expense, induced Italians to come, because it preferred gentlemen brought up in the good school, to low-born Parisians who were only considered good enough for making furniture. If there were any autochthonous artists, they lived obscurely in the provinces and produced for their native towns. The *Ecole de Rome* was founded merely to save the cost of entertaining luxurious foreigners, and to train French artists who should be capable of satisfying Royal tastes. It so happened, that the Italian principles degenerated entirely into emphasis and mannerism, and that French artisans created works that evidenced the keen desire of continuing the national tradition in accordance with the anti-allegoric genius which is the basis of the Gallo-Frankish race. But these were, like Chardin, obscure and unhappy. The School was a true, disciplined bureaucracy, where only those could advance, who, on entering, accepted a certain ideal. The bases of this ideal were two or three principles. First of all, that the Greeks had fixed the eternal model of beauty; next, that the beauty of proportion is alone to be admitted; then, that the representation of the human figure is the highest aim of art; further, that, if there be a beauty of expression compatible with the derangement of proportions, it is only to be permitted in the representation of a certain number of subjects, such as a faun, a triton, Marsyas, Laocoon, etc.—subjects all, that can be found with the Greeks; then, that Greek symbolism and allegory are the keys to all art, and that realism is a heresy, if not as regards details, at least as an end in itself; finally, that it is necessary to conventionalize, to ennoble and arrange nature, and that a work of art

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must be carried to its last degree of perfection, that is to say, *finish* must be considered as a certain notion. These were the axioms of the Beautiful, to which should be added a few more, the principal of which is, that the teaching of art exists and is transmissible, that there is a systematic method of teaching the Beautiful, even to those who lack the faculty of understanding it. In fine, since the Beautiful consists in the proportions of which the Greeks have given us immortal models, it follows that the Beautiful does not belong to the domain of the senses, but to that of logic, and can therefore be taught. If you know the laws of Greek proportions thoroughly and reproduce them faithfully; if, moreover, you observe the precepts given by the masters as regards expression and the rules of composition, you may be certain of possessing an estimable talent.

Art being organized as a corporation, with masters, apprentices, and privileges, the complete systematizing of it was bound to follow. Allegory and proportions—there is the whole School. In a trice it made a distinction between subjects and their realization. It regarded the idea in painting as a moral element, and not as a close adaptation of thought to matter. Born at a period when scholastic spiritualism was omnipotent, the School became accustomed to regard ideas as divinities ruling over vile matter, which is made but to obey. It set up from the first a series of “noble” and “common” subjects, with all the authoritative-ness of dialectics. It will help clearly to understand this state of mind, if we remember the “rules of unity,” which held such tyrannical sway over Racine’s genius,—those rules which Shakespeare, to Voltaire’s disgust, had always disregarded; if we remember that the whole seventeenth century is, so to speak, chained in iron rules that have made it the century of rigid disputation, of pompous and cold majesty, of scruples and of dogmas. How could the School fail to acquire a firm belief in its infallibility, officially invested as it was with the right of teaching, and drawing authority from the Greeks and also—it should not be forgotten—from the military, administrative Roman genius? The School was easily persuaded of its mission to protect art against “bad taste,” and this inspired it almost with fanaticism. Under the head of “noble” came religious and mythological subjects, or those that dealt with episodes of ancient history. Portraits and historical pictures

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were also tolerated. Landscape was banished, and any representation of contemporary life was considered "low" and rigorously proscribed.

Having placed its ideal in the past, and having admitted that the perfect model of the Beautiful had been found, the School was only logical in taking the view that any art not based upon this ideal must be decadent, and that consequently the same subjects must be treated to the end of time, with new meanings attached to them. It is clear, that the School could not have lasted until the present day if it had not



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possessed a sound logic; and, in fact, though its logic is based upon a false principle, it is deduced with the astounding rigour of the reasoning of that epoch.

As the Greek ideal was essentially sculptural, the School of painting saw it through the medium of Raphael and Michelangelo and admitted a certain number of pictorial receipts borrowed from these masters. But in all the teaching of the School this sculptural origin can be traced. Its nude is that of coloured statuary. It was not blind enough to believe that all future centuries would refer to the symbolic ideal with the same vision. It admits variations upon this theme, but the theme must be

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adapted, without being modified. Thus the School built up a formidable equipment of dogmas and of methods, leaving nothing to chance and disorder, foreseeing the most minute shades of difference, and inexorably limiting the domain of the Beautiful, of which it held the keys.

The School may be considered as an *a priori* conception, as a philosophic hypothesis, as a mediaeval syllogism: it was an attempt at definitely fixing the limits of beauty, and the men of whom it consisted were fanatics, because they imagined they had really found a criterion. And this criterion could claim the appearance of truth and a certain historic meaning, by leaning on the Greek genius. If, in the course of this book, I shall level, in accordance with my sincere conviction, the gravest reproaches against the School, justifying them by arguments derived from facts, I am, none the less, forced to acknowledge its conviction and honest good faith, in addition to the just ideas it was able to promulgate. It was conscious of a mission—that of the monks safeguarding the Roman genius during the Frankish epoch. It believed itself to be the necessary outcome of the Renaissance, and it was constituted like the logical systems of that period. It found its ardent defenders, and lived on a breath of faith until this century, when criticism has no longer left any of its dogmas intact, and when, too, the degenerated academic followers of Ingres have only had the one idea of holding out, of profiting by their old renown, of adopting a policy of concessions in the face of the new spirit.

The day on which the School exhausted pagan allegories and heroic scenes by dint of taking them up anew; the day on which it lost sight of the true significance of Greek art, was also the day on which it started upon the road of decline and was inevitably condemned to die, like all systems that are incapable of evolution. The great Italians knew well that Greek art is the reverse of dogmatic art, that it is expressive as well as proportional, bold, sensual, full of movement, and altogether opposed to the emphatic, solemn, and icily cold idea conveyed of it to beginners by the professors of the day. And they also knew that nothing in the Greeks denotes “the spirit of the studio,” that nothing is opposed to the evolution of a future ideal. The wonderful, noble, passionate Italy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw in the Greeks a grand example of liberty as it has been seen in our own days by the consciousness of a

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Nietzsche or a Rodin. It was not influenced by literature. Like the Gothics, it created by itself an intellectual movement, whilst the second Renaissance only translated the pompous and allegorical taste of the *litterati*. The School drew thence a fatal principle, that of imitating in turn the preceding periods. If the Gothics had imitated the Greeks, if these had imitated the Egyptians or the Assyrians, we should have no document, no typical work of antiquity.

Whilst the love for, and the profound knowledge of, Greek aesthetics continued, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the works of the School had a certain value. But at last the rich fund of antique subjects became exhausted. The preoccupation with the *pretty*, which had invaded Italy and was to lead it to complete artistic decadence, took possession of France. The artists of the eighteenth century began to consider the School as a necessary stage for obtaining honours or an easy life, but they were secretly resolved to produce, in their maturity, licentious or sentimental works, likely to win them the favour of the fashion. In the eighteenth century the liberal *frondeur* spirit, then beginning to oppose official majesty and pomp, turned the same epigrams against the hierarchy of the School. It was then that painters were seen at the Academy, who, after their reception, produced works that already heralded the modern ideas.

Under the Empire the School doubled its rigour. The exclusive homage rendered to ancient Rome revived the scholastic spirit; it was a final effort to limit art to dogmatism. In David can be seen at the same time the apogee of the principles of proportion and the expansion of a realism which makes him to-day more precious to us through his portraits than through his unbearable *Sabines*. And finally romanticism burst forth with all the moral strength of republican, and already almost socialist, ideas.

The effort of the School during the nineteenth century has consisted in trying to uphold its dignity as guardian of a certain national code of beauty. The issue of the autocratic regimen and constituted as a corporation, it was directly affected by the social revolution. All it had to do, now, was to impose its presence by a fundamental and unassailable idea. Now, this idea was anti-evolutionary. It was, therefore, natural that the School should be outstripped on all sides. As it occupied the most enviable

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position, it was bound to make a stand. From that moment it agreed to successive concessions. It partially admitted—cautiously and reluctantly—certain innovations that would not have been stopped by its decree of excommunication. It endeavoured to annex hypocritically the new tendencies and to demonstrate that it was not opposed to evolution, but reserved to itself the right to direct it; and it professed to believe itself still the supreme tribunal for watching over the flights of youthful daring. At least, one part of its members took up this attitude, well aware of its urgency and of the fact, that the old ideal of the nude and of drapery would no longer suffice. The other part, sure of the prestige left by decorations and institutions in the minds of the French, was vigorously opposed to any innovation, proclaiming it sheer profanity. At home, in Rome, and at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, the School kept up the teaching that Lebrun, raised from the dead, might have given. Whether it were due to conviction or to interest, the School became a fixed point, a centre of hostile reaction, in the evolution of the century. It thus identified itself with the adepts of a philosophic hypothesis that had been overtaken by facts, or with those members of the clergy who, even to this very day, profess to find everything in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Ingres was a great man who, sincere and faithful to Greek genius far more than to the School itself, really believed that the beauty of character, which the century tried to realize, was inferior to the beauty of proportion. He was the last eminent defender of the ancient conception which Lessing had reduced to a system in his works on esthetics. He shows, moreover, in his portraits the gifts of a great realist and a French style. But after him everything fell to pieces with surprising rapidity. Although his date was earlier than the subject of this book, I have thought it right to include a nude and a portrait by Ingres, to remind the reader of the admirable qualities of the man to whom Degas, Puvis de Chavannes, Besnard, and Manet have most persistently rendered homage, in spite of the narrowness of his teaching, of his aversion for the Gothics as well as for the romanticists, and in spite of his having exerted his influence on behalf of a cause that has done much harm to French art.

Imbued with contempt of Nature and of contemporary life, the School arrived at proscribing even in Greek art all that might be interpreted in the modern sense; it made a selection. Thus, in its love of the nude, it



Ingres.

THE ODALISQUE.

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established canons more vigorous than those of Praxiteles, and finally created a kind of typical woman that has no racial characteristics, and consists of a certain number of forms which are not borrowed from life, but from the classic masters. Ingres already, with all his genius and his realistic vision, had begun to fall back upon the imitation of Raphael. The academic painters of lesser talent outdid him in this, and that is how they arrived at invariably drawing that bizarre creature we might call "the woman of the School," who has no real existence. She can



PISSARRO
BOULEVARDE MONTMARTRE

be found again in all the academies of Europe, with her "pretty" or "majestic" expression, her young girl's breasts, her inevitably immense head of hair, her small hands with the raised little finger, her pink skin, that is more like silk or china than real flesh, and her affected, insipid, and sentimental grace. She is an international type, and it is characteristic of the School, the would-be guardian of national art and taste, that all the academies of the world teach how to paint the same picture in the same order with the same receipts. Having thus a uniform design, the School could not fail to have a uniform colouring as well. It had its transmissible methods: painting in the studio from models to whom

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certain actions and movements were prescribed, it fell into a sombre colouring, into heavy, bituminous shadows, without vibration, and destined only to give value to the lighted portions. It tried less and less to express the volume, the consistence of the bodies, which can only be properly perceived in the open air and in movement. It almost hypnotized itself in endeavouring to *finish*, that is, to find perfection of design in the minute imitation of the smallest detail, with absolute disregard of broad planes and movement. Its ideal of design, directed by a misunderstood striving after *purity*, became exact, dry, poor, and almost as graphic as an architect's plan. Thus degenerated the Venetians' superb art of design, that had been so ample, so full of life. The deplorable marvel was realized, of being able to paint *from memory* a *Biblis* or a *Daphne* without leaving the room, and without even seeing a nude woman, by painting everything, even the landscape, according to receipts. And this was considered the summit of idealism! And thus we can see at the Salons of the present day, pictures of nymphs and Cupids playing in surroundings of foliage and brooks and meadows copied upon tapestries with utter disregard of truth.

As regards composition the School handed down the same errors. Here, it is true, it was forced to admit the evolution of the *genres*; but, as I have said, in doing so it tried to assimilate them, so as to put the public on the wrong scent as regards its secret resolution of reaction. It professed to introduce "exalted ideas" and "poetry." First it adhered to subjects from Greek and Roman history, to the interpretation of Homer and Racine, and between 1750 and 1820 there was quite a profusion of large declamatory canvases, in which the most glaring faults were obvious. These quasi-historic scenes had no value, either for the truthful rendering of landscapes, of accessories, of costumes, or for that of movement, or ethnological observation. Draped models were thrown together in theatrical attitudes, grouped without any understanding of decorative effect. The foregrounds are either empty, or, where the gaps are filled, it is by the introduction of scattered arms and other objects. In the official battle pictures ordered by the State the victorious king or prince was gigantic, calm, and smiling, seated on a fiery charger that had been borrowed from the Parthenon frieze, and the battle could be vaguely distinguished in the background. When it was a question of

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painting contemporary personages, the School did not think of studying their psychology: this study was only considered legitimate in portraiture. In its anxiety to *cunoble*, it continued to make the models pose, and to suggest under the costume of the period the muscles drawn to conform with its ideal of proportion. Like Titian or Velasquez, the realists have found it quite natural to make human beings pose in the attitude of their functions; they have completely suppressed the model and made the workman, the loiterer of the *Boulevard*, or the peasant, pose according to their subjects. But the School considered such searching after truth as "low." That is what gives their modern compositions that cold, emphatic, studied and artificial appearance; that, too, is what makes them so annoying with their misapplied knowledge, their preoccupation with orderly arrangement, their disposition of balanced groups to left and right, and all that geometry which cannot be found in real life and has been imitated in such ludicrous fashion by the figuration of the stage. At the time when the young romanticism arose, exclaiming—to use the famous quotation—"who will deliver us from the Greeks and Romans?" it did not rise against Racine or against Hellenic art. It rose against the tedious tragedies of the Empire, against Delille's pseudo-Virgilian poetry, against the "firemen" of the School, so called because of their headgear; in a word, against the parody of a beautiful past which now only served as an excuse for mediocrities.

Finish was a sterile notion, an error, for a work of art is only valuable and enduring if it lends itself to interpretation and to successive suggestions; that is to say, if the beholder himself can finish it. *Local colour* was, technically, a mistake. *Composition* was the reverse of what life displays to us. To these faults the School added two others. The first was its symbolism, which it did not bring up to date, and which became meaningless, for symbols are transformed in the course of time, and even if we preserve Greek symbolism as the type of poetic diction, it is only on condition that we assimilate it, and that we see something else in Apollo or in Venus than was seen by the allegorists of the seventeenth century. The second fault was a kind of false mysticalness which pledged the School to abandon colour, and to consider it as a *sensual* element. The result was a gray, sooty and poor style of painting, the colour of which was foolishly described as *chaste*!

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The pagan element was thus accompanied by an element of prudery: a strange reserve indeed! Even the Venetians were considered too sensual; dull colours and smooth canvases were the craze, and academic painting finally succumbed to complete anaemia, imagining all the while that it had attained to style and purity.

Ary Scheffer's pictures afford a good example of this union of sophisms. Some of them are rendered interesting by very concentrated expression, and since he was sincerely religious, this poverty and dryness suited his ascetic ideal very well. But what can be said of Ingres's pupils, and particularly of Signol, whose name has become synonymous for bad painting? With the exception of Amanry Duval, who was a delicate artist and has left us some fine decorations and some interesting pamphlets on art; and of Chenavard, who was an "intellectual" rather than a painter, Ingres has created nothing but mediocrities, for Chassériau cut adrift from him to turn towards Delacroix as soon as his great personality had dawned. What can be said of Delaroche, unless it be, that he is unendurably declamatory and tricky? Truly, the few fine academic painters of this century were what they were, so to speak, in spite of the School; their faults are due to its teaching, and their qualities are due to themselves. That is what, in fairness must be thought of Couture, who was a real painter, endowed with strong qualities, serious knowledge and a certain style, and who painted some beautiful portraits. It applies with equal justice to Paul Baudry, completely forgotten to-day, but a remarkable draughtsman, though lacking originality. Baudry and Couture are always reminiscent of the masters; they have given us nothing original; they never give one the sensation of something new, but that is inevitable with the painters of the School. We must, at least, acknowledge in them a certain skill that has nothing of that false display of virtuosity which was later tried by the School, when it attempted to appear modern.

We shall find among the orientalists and decorative artists Théodore Chassériau, who is one of the great painters of the nineteenth century. He is strangely placed between classicism and romanticism. And we shall find Elie Delaunay among the portrait painters, amongst whom must also be counted Ernest Hébert, who is one of the glories of the School and one of its most original adherents. Hébert has also created



J. J. Henner.

AN IDYLL.

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some fine religious works which, as regards delicacy and grace, are a near approach to the spirit of the quattrocentists. But it must be stated that the School has made efforts to claim for its own glory a number of men, upon whom, in their lifetime, it had only looked askance, or who had turned their back upon it at their time of maturity. Thus I cannot identify with its theories the beautiful work of Henner, whom we shall find again among the idealists. Although Henner belongs to the Institute, his ideas do not, and the same can be said of Jean-Paul Laurens, whom we shall study among the historical painters, and who has never ceased to develop towards a broader and more generous vision. Furthermore, the Academy is now in a state of rapid disintegration; it counts in its ranks the most dissimilar men; it has gradually lost all its former pretensions and the cohesion of its doctrines. It is now nothing but a kind of reactionary association of administrative control.

During the second Empire the Academy was held in great favour, and continued to be so until about 1880. From this period date the works of Cabanel who showed, together with real qualities, an unpleasant affectation and tediousness. His decorations at the Pantheon, depicting the history of St. Louis, comply in no respect with the exigencies of the decorative spirit. They are orderly, correct compositions, without life or emotion, and painted with that precision and neatness, that impartial care bestowed upon a facial expression or a sword-hilt, which the School has always considered the ideal of perfection. But



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RUE DE L'ÉPICERIE, ROUEN

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they are, beyond all, pictures that do not take their proper place in the building and have been painted with utter disregard of its conditions of light. Mural art is altogether foreign to the School and has never been understood. Cabanel was a fashionable portrait painter, elegant and soft; and the worst things he has done are beyond question his mythological nudes, particularly his too well known *Birth of Venus*, in which a figure of fairly supple drawing is disgraced by syrupy pink carnations, an impossible sea, and ridiculous little cupids floating about with intolerably affected gestures. This picture and a good many more "masterpieces" in the same taste have been reproduced on innumerable sweet-boxes, and this is the best criticism that could be made upon them. Similar good fortune has been the share of the nudes painted by M. Bouguereau, who, indifferent to the whole of modern evolution, has repeated the same picture for the last forty years. His painting is the ideal of softness. It is smooth, minute, careful, and obeys all the requirements of the "pretty." Such works are as far removed from Ingres and the masters as could be: they are truly decadent, in spite of their authors' pretensions to preserve public taste and to reprimand the pretended decadence by which they are surrounded; and it is difficult to understand how they can refer to the Greeks who were so healthy, so true, so energetic and so fond of pulsating life. To the ignorant, one of Bouguereau's pictures gives the impression of a fine drawing, because it imitates faithfully and patiently the very slightest details. But a nude by Bouguereau is flat, stuck upon the background of the canvas, and cut out dryly. She does not turn round, does not live in air and light; she is made of wax; she has neither personality, nor expression, nor real body. It is nothing but a linear drawing, conventionally coloured; it is not a being capable of laughing, of feeling, or of walking; it is a congealed image. And so likewise are the nudes that M. Jules Lefebvre has painted with a symbolism that consists of putting a bow into Cupid's hand and wings on his back, a mirror into the hand of Truth, a star upon the forehead of a model representing the *Evening Star*, or a laurel wreath and a lyre to denote a poet. This is what the symbolism of the masters has come to in the hands of their continuators! fortunately M. Lefebvre has signed some portraits of real merit.

Hippolyte Flandrin's painting is estimable and tame. The same



Bouguereau.

LA VIERGE CONSOLATRICE.

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remark applies to the Roman compositions of MM. Glaize and Barrias. M. Gérôme has taken up in turn orientalist painting, *genre* painting, history, and the nude. Some of his canvases have become popular through being engraved (*Duel after the Ball*, *Thirst*, *Morituri te salutant*). In these he reveals himself as a correct draughtsman and as a colourist without original harmonies, but clever in composing and capable of true dramatic feeling. His historical pictures bear witness to an erudition that brings to mind Alma-Tadema and Rochegrosse. It is to be regretted that he should have preferred to express himself in small canvases, in which careful attention to details gets the better of fine, powerful execution. His canvases are curious knick-knacks rather than strong works; nevertheless they show much knowledge and skill. This painter is also a sculptor. A passionate admirer of ancient art, he has amused himself with imitating polychromatic statues and Tanagra figures. His talent for this kind of work is unquestionable. It is, however, regrettable that he should not have tried to apply these admirable ancient methods to figures of contemporary style and expression. In reproducing the dancers and goddesses of antiquity, he has limited himself to clever *pastiches* that are of necessity inferior to the inimitable grace of his models. Some of his statuettes, *Attila*, *Bouaparte*, are, on the other hand, excellent and very personal. M. Gérôme is, on the whole, a versatile and interesting artist, and his personality is in many ways too great for the narrow dogmatism of the school. His dramatic feeling, which is literary as well as pictorial, springs from a spirit reared on classicism, but thoroughly French in its romanticism with its accompanying love of splendour and brilliant details. His acquaintance with the East quickened in him the taste for archaeology and his figures are real and logical. He was, in fine, the first to paint pictures of ancient history without the false conventions that robbed the pseudo-Romans of David's school of all historic interest.

As far as M. Léon Bonnat's work is concerned, it can be divided in two parts: his portraits, which we shall find again in another chapter, and his compositions. His *Beheading of St. Denis*, at the Pantheon, is, perhaps, an example of the worst the School has produced: total absence of religious feeling, unpleasant abuse of blood, theatrical attitudes, false lights, heavy and dirty shadows, a commonplace angel descending from

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heaven in a cloud that seems to be made of mud, the disproportions of a scene that is at once overcrowded and empty; all this combines to make a veritable blot in a monument where Puvis de Chavannes's *Saint Geneviève* is quietly triumphant. M. Bonnat has tried many other compositions, and always with the same display of heavy violence, which characterizes his painting and spoils even the solid qualities of his portraits. Praiseworthy qualities and a certain distinction should be noted in Olivier Merson and in his son Luc-Olivier; a melancholy style and harmonious colouring in Ferdinand Humbert; the temperament of a fine painter in the low-toned style must be acknowledged in Antoine Vollon, who produced fine, vigorous figures and sumptuous still-life pictures. He should, however, with more justice be placed by the side of Courbet, notwithstanding his tardy reception by the Institute. Finally, in mentioning M. Fernand Cormon's interesting compositions of pre-historic times, I come to certain painters of the Academic School, who have tried to give an illusion of modernism, remaining all the while brilliant pupils of the School. M. Roybet shows qualities that cannot be denied, though they are decidedly cheap, in his scenes of the Louis XIII. period, where he introduces his friends in costume and imitates, with more or less success, Hals and Velasquez, replacing genius by cleverness, and style by *pastiche*. Among the orientalists we shall find Benjamin Constant, who had a great fashionable reputation, painted theatrical or official portraits, and showed himself an agreeable virtuoso without serious originality. Finally, we come to Carolus-Duran. During the first period of his life he painted some beautiful, realistic works, notably the *Accident* and the *Woman with the Glove*, which gave promise of a really fine painter. But it seems as though, with growing success, this artist succumbed to an easy style. Having become the portraitist of the wealthy *bourgeoisie* he painted in a kind of pseudo-Spanish style, with gaudy colours, velvet dresses and plush hangings, and composed some regrettable canvases, notably a ceiling at the Louvre, which is a bad parody of the Venetians, without any interest but a certain virtuosity that seeks the most distorted attitudes in order to make itself felt. These showy works have detracted from the artist's merit, whilst they gained him the favour of the public, which is always easily impressed.

With this I must close the enumeration of the glories of the Institute;

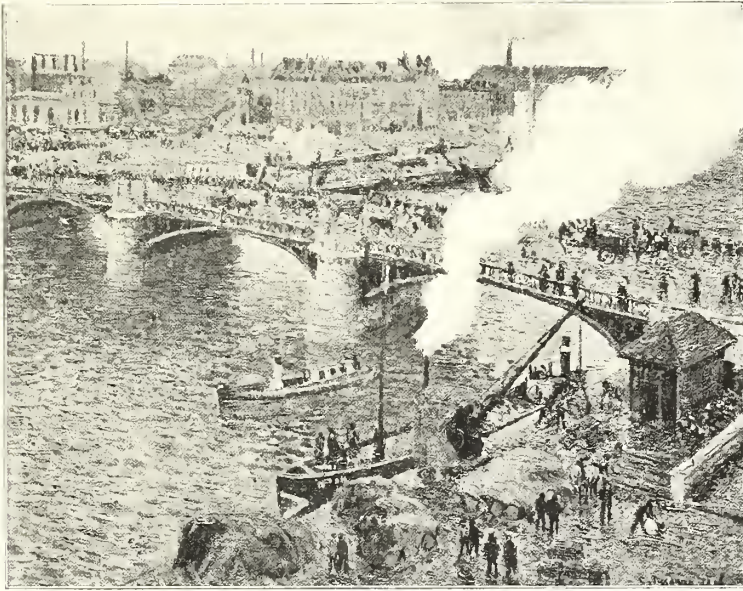


Carolus-Duran.

A STUDY.

THE ACADEMIC PAINTERS

it might have been accompanied by an extensive list of secondary artists, but this would be of no interest in a work that only professes to define the bold outlines of an epoch. The Academy, at the present hour, is a mixture of many diverse elements. It remains homogeneous in its teaching in Rome and in Paris, and continues, under the guarantee of the State, to play its part of systematic art teaching, and it influences all the young minds who apply to it either from traditional respect, or from a desire to profit by the advantages of the career it offers to all who



PISSARRO
THE BOILDIEAUX BRIDGE AT ROUEN

lend it a docile ear. But it has lost almost all its prestige in the eyes of the public of foreign countries, and the number of artists who turn away from it is growing from day to day. To quote only one instance, Besnard gained the *grand-prix* of Rome. The competitions and their commonplace subjects supply the press year by year with material for jests. The School is still protected by the State, because of its old renown, and because routine is an eternal force. The State would be much embarrassed if it had to reconstruct a modern method of art-teaching on a new basis. Moreover, the members of the Institute are high dignitaries who could not well be deprived of their acquired rights;

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

but those who are gradually replacing them, evince, in spite of all, a more liberal spirit, although they apparently conform to the ancient precepts. And the State, whose Fine Arts Commissions are also subject to change, has encouraged some artists, whom the School continues to loathe. It is none the less true, that the academic painters are excessively favoured. They earn enormous sums, fill the museums, receive the most coveted distinctions, and officially represent French glory to the foreigner, whilst, in reality, they are but a narrow clan living on a bygone reputation absolutely unrepresentative of the national soul. They have invented nothing, and the best among them will not leave us a single picture the technique and style of which cannot be found in the old masters. Sons of a retrogressive theory, they have turned their backs upon their time, and it leaves them behind, loving those only who have courageously tried to find in it a new form of beauty. The most clamorous and the most brilliant, a Constant, a Carolus-Duran, and even a Baudry will only be remembered in the future as good pupils; whilst a Degas, a Corot, and a Millet, who have been misjudged, disowned, and poor, will appear more and more as great, original spirits. Putting aside the School and its artificiality, we have come back to the Gothics, the primitives, the rich French vein that had been so unjustly neglected; and we form an idea of the Greeks and Italians, that does not resemble what the School has said of them. At the same time we have a cult of Rembrandt, Ruysdael, Reynolds, Turner, Goya and Velasquez, which the School has only followed reluctantly. And now even its last reason for existence has been called in question: that of teaching, and particularly the spirit and the influence made to bear upon it. Within recent times Gustave Moreau, who belonged to the Institute, though the academic painters detested him, practised during five years the profession of teacher at the School, where his liberalism and his exalted and healthy ideas caused such a revolution, that all the young men wanted to enter his studio. We shall study later this singular genius of the transition. His example was significant. He delivered a further blow to the tottering academic principles. In a little, the State, that had already instituted scholarships to enable young artists to visit the galleries of Europe, was to question the sojourn at the Villa Medici, and refuse to allow it to be considered more important, and to be extended longer, than the sojourn

THE ACADEMIC PAINTERS

at the Hague, at Madrid, at Dresden, or at the National Gallery. That day was to mark the final overthrow of Italianism in France, after three centuries of oppressive rule, two of which had interrupted the national lineage; and this event, which the academic painters bemoan and call *anarchy*, is simply a measure in conformity with the evolution of mind.

This could only have been brought about by the courageous and patient effort, the conviction, the example and the suffering of a long succession of real creators, of those who believed in life, believed in the continuity of beauty, and refused to hate or disdain their own time, of those who have admired the past without servility, and formed our style with their eyes on the future, and, beyond all, investigated with faith and love their race and its genius. It is for their sake, so long neglected; it is for the sake of those who lived and died without honours, without reward and too often without aid, that I have found it necessary to speak freely and sternly of the others, without malice towards them, but taking pains to declare impartially what they are, to put them back to the very secondary rank which they should never have left. I have done so in thorough good faith, with a special view to giving clear shape to an idea with which the British public can scarcely be familiar, since even the majority of Frenchmen are not aware of it: the idea of Italian interference, imposing upon the French race a symbolism contrary to its nature, usurping the place of autochthonous tradition, and dying from its own exclusiveness, in face of a succession of innovators accused one after the other of sins against taste, and proving themselves in the end to be the real upholders of tradition. This notion, corroborated by facts, throws light upon the whole history of French art, and especially illuminates the polemic part played by the nineteenth century, and the immense importance of Delacroix and Manet, of whom it may well be said, that they delivered the death-blow to the dogmatism of the School.

CHAPTER III

THE REALISTS AND THE CHARACTERISTS

The realist ideas derived from the influence of Delacroix.—Gustave Courbet and the movement of protest against the ideas of Ingres and the School.—Edouard Manet and the transformation of realism into the investigation of modern character.—The idea of the beauty of expression begins to oppose that of the beauty of form.—Manet's influence creates the style of modern illustration, after Daumier, Gavarni and Guys.—Degas and characterism.—Raffaëlli, Forain.—Bastien-Lepage and minute realism.—The modern painters : Roll, Ribot, Lautrec, etc.

“YOU take the lead in the decrepitude of your art,” wrote Baudelaire to Manet. This decrepitude the great poet applied to the academic style of Ingres's pupils, while they in turn applied it to the romantic and realistic daring of Delacroix's pupils. Ingres and Delacroix, reconciled to-day in our admiration, were then the protagonists of that old and eternal struggle between the ancient and the modern, the adherents of Gluck and of Piccini. The genius of the one was used as a pretext for denying that of the other, with all the injustice inherent in periods of feverish artistic activity. However, one of the first consequences of Delacroix was the establishment, together with romanticism, of a recrudescence of realism. A historical and orientalist painter, a painter of modern tragedy, Delacroix was also, quite apart from his gifts as decorator and lyricist, an intense realist, and, like all the greatest artists, gave expression to the heroism and the dramatic side of broad, but scrupulous observation of truth. While certain painters cling to his romanticism and to his composition, others cling particularly to his bold qualities of truthfulness, and powerful, sombre expressiveness, and retain these alone, attaching but little importance to the subjects. During the period which separates the first romanticism from the second, painters are much concerned with scruples as regards truth which appears to them as the safest guarantee. Whilst Ingres, and after him, his disciples, cling to mythological or religious subjects,



Gustave Courbet.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST.

THE REALISTS AND THE CHARACTERISTS

nudes, and drapery; whilst David's successors continue peaceably to paint Greek or Roman scenes, pictures of Brutus, Virginia, and Clytemnestra; whilst Ary Scheffer evinces, in his religious pictures, a tender and truly mystical soul which almost makes amends for his timid drawing and his ugly colour, it seems as though the Academy, vanquished by the romanticist movement, would fain borrow from it certain elements and resign itself to the historical picture. Paul Delaroche appears as a strange compromise between the School and Delacroix in his pictures which are at once pompous and tame; but, being a mediocrity, he does



DEGAS
CARRIAGES AT THE RACES

not get beyond dressing in historical costumes his studio models, who have neither character, nor truth; and he shows himself very inferior in this respect to Eugène Devéria, for instance, in whom, as in Delacroix, the decorative influence of the Venetians is revived. At the present time the younger generation believes that romanticism only served to create in Delaroche a new commonplace painter, of no more worth than those of the School. They find again in Delaroche's theatrical manner the studio precepts of Rome, the untrue attitudes, the false distinction, the skill reduced to the imitation of details, and incapable of producing a powerful whole, the artificial lighting and all the faults that David himself, the only truly great academic painter, has not avoided. If

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

David painted portraits that are far superior to his compositions; if Ingres, too, painted some that are more beautiful than his allegories; if Delacroix himself painted the black slave in his *Algiers Women* or the corpses in his *Massacre of Scio*, they did so by tracing their steps back to the realism of the old masters, of whom Goya, in Spain, had just given so generous and new an interpretation. One thinks of him, of Frans Hals, of Rembrandt. And it was this preoccupation that drew success and the approbation of a whole generation to the first pictures of a magnificent worker, who arose in face of Delaroche, of Couture, and of Ingres's pupils: Gustave Courbet appeared as the deliverer destined to maintain the French tradition of clear realism, at the moment when classicism was breaking down, and when Delacroix's romanticism was gradually passing into the hands of the School in the shape of orientalism and historical painting.

Courbet was not an "intellectual." He understood nothing of the mythological allegories and the symbols of the School, which he called "riddles." He understood scarcely any better the romantic, legendary, or tragical compositions, which he called "painted literature." He was solely a painter who had made up his mind to paint only what he saw, and to restrict his effort to this. "I have never seen winged men," he says bluntly, "and consequently I shall never paint an angel." He did not hide his contempt for the dissensions between classicists and romanticists, whom he reproached for agreeing on one point—technical artificiality. His only occupation was to paint well, with strength and skill. It may be thought that his point of view is narrow, but at any rate, he will always remain one of the most admirable artisans of the palette. His vigorous mind contented itself with a popular logic; but it is very far from the case, that he only produced masterly copies of life. If his mind was unadorned, or rather affected, theoretically, to reject ideology of any sort, which he thought an intruder in the realm of painting, his character and sensibility were refined. Courbet was violent, tormented, robust, born with the temperament of a revolutionist party leader, which was to bring him to join the Commune after having rejected, as a republican, the cross offered to him by Napoleon III. There is in him a kind of dark passion which is his personal romanticism, and which prevents him from letting his art degenerate into mere



THE WAVE.

Courtesy.

THE REALISTS AND THE CHARACTERISTS

clever and sterile imitation. In his work can be found far more poetry than he seems to be aware of and to desire.

The apparently narrow ideas of this great artist are apt to shock us to-day, just as those of Manet, his direct successor. At the time when he expressed them, they were salutary. Original technique was gravely compromised in the two camps of figure painters. The one party, painting fantastic and declamatory scenes with mediaeval or Oriental tinsel, and the other, rendering idealistic, religious and mythological



DEGAS
HORSES IN THE MEADOWS

painting insipid, both combined, with some very rare exceptions, to sacrifice execution to the all too famous "idea," which is nothing, unless it is supported by beautiful means of expression. And the landscapists who had only just newly discovered the traditions of Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Ruysdael and Hobbema, had begun their magnificent series of works, without being counted in the artistic movement. For, at this moment, landscape was still considered an inferior *genre*, and this absurd idea prevailed until about fifteen years ago!¹ Courbet's strong reaction

¹ It is hardly credible, but at the time when the landscape-painter Louis Français, weighed down by age and honours, the representative of an already classic generation, was received by the Academy, it seemed almost as if they were consenting to an innovation.

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

was therefore valuable, giving back to the painters the taste for beautiful matter and beautiful colour, the love of the true, and turning them away from the excessive preoccupation with pretentiously symbolical or romantic subjects. Courbet proved himself a worthy heir of the great painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of Rembrandt, of Hals, and even of Tintoretto, in giving being to works like his own portrait (*The Man with the Leather Belt*), the *Young Man Wounded*, the *Interment at Ornans*, the *Afternoon at Ornans*, and the *Studio*. These are pure masterpieces of powerful colouring, warm light, strong drawing, and sober and tragic style. The *Studio* especially, with its



MANET
THE DEAD TOREADOR

mingling of nudes and modern people, is one of the most beautiful canvases that have ever been painted. This is realism in its most fascinating aspect, heightened through the splendour of colour and material—realism as it was understood by the Dutchmen and the fine Spaniards. The *Interment at Ornans*, which is so badly hung at the Louvre, may be considered as an example of serious science. Its large and sombre landscape, its tall figures draped in black, its astounding psychological studies of faces, are worthy of the most perfect pages of Flaubert, and correspond almost exactly with the impression “*Madame Bovary*,” produced in French literature in opposition to the sentimental novel. The faces of the *Man with the Leather Belt* and the *Young Man Wounded* attain the beautiful style of Van Dyck, and also recall Delacroix by their concentrated fire. Such a painter had nothing in common with

THE REALISTS AND THE CHARACTERISTS

the realism that has appeared since. His sight was *true*, and not *exact*; his work is not a painted photograph, a dry, clever, useless copy of obvious details. It is bathed in golden light and warm shadow, it offers broad aspects, and its superb mastery stirs the emotion. Less happy in the expression of femininity, which his massive genius understood but badly, Courbet painted only coarse nudes, for fear of yielding to the striving after the "pretty," which led the academic painters to colour the figures of their impersonal women with pink and insipid tones. Looking upon Courbet's nudes, one cannot but think of Rembrandt's, which are also more beautiful in character, than in form; and it will be noticed that the *Woman with a Parrot* is at least wonderfully drawn and faultlessly harmonious, though one can only regret the use made of these qualities. Courbet had the good sense to be in accord with his ideas, and not to attempt "subjects" which were beyond his scope. His landscapes are very peculiar. He delighted in greenish lights filtering through dense foliage, in rocky sites with flowing brooks and climbing deer, and his *Stags Fighting* and *Deer Cover* will remain works of great truth, in which breadth of drawing is united with very fine colouring. He did not foresee, to the same extent as Théodore Rousseau or Daubigny, the immense field opened up for landscape painting by open-air study; he did not equal them in the decorative feeling for silhouettes, and while he surpassed them in his attention to reflections and the reciprocal influences of colours, and excelled particularly in suggesting the quality of atmosphere, some of his landscapes really



MANET

YOUNG MAN IN COSTUME OF MAJO

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

produce the sensation of freshness or of oppressive heat. His famous *Waste Land*, which caused a great stir, appears to-day a little hard and opaque. But, on the whole, Courbet's work in its entirety, as it appears to us after the lapse of time, conquers through its constant impression of power and through the gifts which are conspicuous in it. It certainly does not give rise to any lofty or rare thoughts. But it is beautiful in its health, its strength, and its broad sincerity; and at the exhibition of 1900, where certain canvases of his were to be seen again, notably the admirable *Good Morning, Monsieur Courbet*, in which the painter has represented himself, a sack on his back, and greeted by a friend on a road in full sunlight, everybody was astounded at the unassailable magic of this beautiful talent which gained in intensity what it lost in imaginative grandeur.

There was a certain heaviness in Gustave Courbet, a love of low colour, which clung a little too closely to the Dutchmen and to Delacroix; something also that, in spite of being romantic and realistic, savoured more of the museum than of direct life. Another painter was about to be born, who was destined to have the glory of clarifying these tendencies and of adding to them a savour, a vivacity, altogether French. Whilst Courbet, applauded by his generation, scandalized the School; whilst Couture gave it a little prestige through the real value of his technique, which was infinitely superior to that of the worthless disciples of Ingres, Flandrin, or Signol, a young pupil appeared at the very studio of this morose painter, who soon expelled him for his excessive independence, Edouard Manet began to paint. In twenty years of desperate work he was to revolutionize his epoch, to push realism much further than Courbet, and to invent *characterism*, transforming thus all modern art.

Manet was deeply influenced by Courbet, but most of all by the Spaniards, by Goya, and then by Hals. His ideas were originally those of Courbet. He abhorred romantic exaggerations, and no less the *Ecole de Rome*. Nevertheless, his character was essentially different from that of the painter of Ornans. Elegant, brilliant, an indefatigable worker with the bearing of a *boulevardier*, enamoured of feminine grace, Manet's was a combative spirit, but as receptive to music and literature as to painting. He soon made friends with certain writers, Zola and Goncourt, who were then beginning to agitate against the "idealist"



E. Manet.

TORERO.

THE REALISTS AND THE CHARACTERISTS

art of the virtuous novel, and these friendships impelled him to search for a new style of painting, abandoning the past far more completely than Courbet had done. Manet's first manner was low in tone, and most distinctly under the influence of Goya. In the manner of this great artist he painted numerous bullfight scenes, guitareros, and Spanish dancers. The *Dead Torcador* is the most beautiful piece painted by Manet in this period. But his recollections of Spain and Italy induced him to paint some religious pictures, the *Christ Reviled*



MANET
IN THE SQUARE

and the *Christ with the Angels*. Finally, preoccupied with the complete simplification of modelling and detail, and with trying to find a character absolutely modern, yet at the same time linked to such beloved masters as Jordaens and Hals, Manet, at the age of thirty, painted his *Olympia*, that strange and strong work which gave so much pleasure to Baudelaire. Its interest to-day is rather of an historical nature: it marks a date in the history of French painting. It can only be impartially appreciated by taking into full consideration the immense effort it represented at a time when academic art had absorbed the degenerated romanticism, ruled supreme at the Salons, excommunicating all who

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

refused to accept its dogmas, and imposed upon the overwhelming majority of the public the prestige of its official authority. Manet was considered a mystificator or a fool, and his life was thenceforth to be a never-ceasing struggle, a series of rejections from the Salons, insults, injustice, and ridicule in the Press. The *Olympia* is a debatable work, in which, however, one can find the stamp of a fine will, a desire for drawing that should disdain clever detail, a desire to establish broad



DEGAS
THE GREEK DANCE—PASTEL

planes and correct values with a vigour and frankness worthy of the old masters.

Henceforth, from the day of this picture, Manet's fame was made. That is to say, he was the most attacked man in Paris, but also the man upon whom were turned the eyes of all young painters desirous of independence and novelty. Gradually Manet brightened his palette, left the Spanish subjects, and ventured to paint modern people, whom he even mixed with nude women in his *Picnic Breakfast*, which represents some painters and their models on an excursion. The canvas created a

scandal; people accused him of immorality, clean forgetting that the galleries are full of analogous compositions due to the greatest Venetians. The figures in this picture, especially the nude woman in the foreground, are of the first order, and there is also one of the finest bits of still-life that have ever been painted. But the landscape is still studio-work and looks like a tapestry background. At that hour the prestige of the principles of the School was still so great that a landscape was arranged behind figures by modifying its tones, so as to give

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value to the harmonies of the figures, instead of modifying the colours of the figures according to the light of the scene in which they were placed. And yet, the primitives had understood this, and Poussin, Claude Lorrain and Watteau had been! But the School, moreover, only admitted the interest of an exact landscape if it was the sole subject of a picture, and, as I have said before, considered landscape as a secondary *genre*, useful, at most, to serve as decorative background to a figure picture. It was only later that Manet was to overthrow this prejudice, which to-day seems to us so illogical. For the moment he applied himself particularly to opening the doors of painting to subjects taken from the life flowing around him, that is to say, to rise violently against the preconceived idea of "nobility" which condemned the reproduction of contemporary life to remain within the limits of book and newspaper illustration. All Manet's efforts during the first period of his career were set in this direction, and in this he went



DEGAS

THE DANCER AT THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S

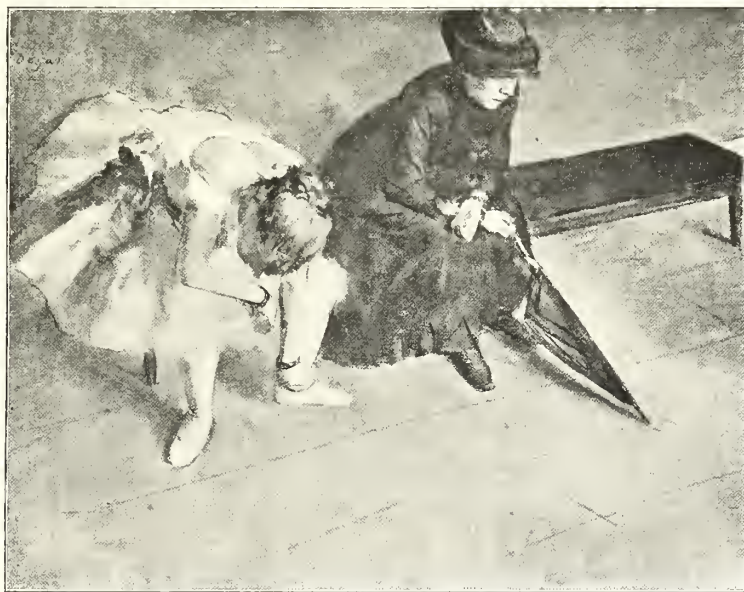
hand in hand with Flaubert, Baudelaire, Goncourt and Zola, who effected a similar revolution in literature. Following this idea, Manet painted his principal canvases, the *Balcony*, the *Reader*, the portrait of the engraver *Desboutin*, the *Execution of Maximilian*, the portraits of the actor *Rouvière* and of the singer *Faure* in the part of Hamlet, the *Travelling Beggars*, the *Bou Bock* which was well received by the public, the *Fifer*, and numerous pieces of still-life, studies and seascapes,

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

which reveal a marvellous artistic organization. To these should be added some smaller canvases, like the *Music at the Tuileries*, the *Opera Ball*, in which a crowd of figures of small dimensions and astounding correctness move about, portraits of *Zola* and *Rochefort*, pastel drawings of women and the full-length portrait of *Mme. Berthe Morisot*. In all these Manet appears as a painter absorbed by reality and strength, but remaining at the same time fanciful, supple, nervous, and thoroughly French in his style of arranging and presenting figures and objects. His frankness is quite classical, but after the clear and simple classicism of Jordaens, Hals, Rembrandt and the Germans of the sixteenth century. He paints in bold, broad touches, juxtaposing strong shadows and lights, without having recourse to excessive use of half tones. He draws with the constant idea in his mind of giving the sensation of the volume of the figures rather than the details of their costume and anatomy; he is a *painter of movement*, endowed with striking gifts. Finally, he excels in expressing the different substances he paints, flesh, cloth, china, linen, or flowers. The *Breakfast*, considered from this point of view, is a picture of masterly variety. As to the subjects selected by Manet, they may be said to have created modern painting and determined the new direction of style. He was the most personal initiator of the *beauty of character*. He had the courage to love his time and to find it full of interest; he avoided the circle traced round painters by "linear beauty," condemning them to an indefinite search for combinations of proportions in the nude and in allegory. He understood the beauty that springs from the profound observation of the individual character of any being, as Rembrandt's genius had understood it in his time. Drawing upon himself the fury of a whole school, repaid for his work by derision only, and violently attacked from his first appearance until almost to his death, he set, finally, an example of superb individualism, opened up a new road, aided a whole generation to pass along it, and contributed towards the ruin of academic prestige and the consequent raising of the national tradition. But it is not right to say, as has been perfidiously insinuated, that Manet was of value as an initiator, and failed personally to produce complete things. It is true that he devoted part of his life to research, that he had to shake off the influence of the Spaniards, that he groped about, that he had to invent altogether his second manner,

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and that every possible difficulty was put in his way. But for all that he painted some masterpieces which can defend themselves and have no need, like his *Olympia*, to be partly excused and praised as original attempts. In this chapter Edouard Manet should be left at the threshold of his second period. But to have united in himself all the merits which we have just examined would suffice for his glory. His work is that of the greatest French painter of the last fifty years. He tried himself, and attained mastery, in every *genre*; he brought about not only a move-



DE GAS
WAITING

ment, but an entirely new vision; he showed the fallacy of certain axioms that had been arbitrarily imposed upon art. His place is therefore an important one. He stirred up more ideas than Courbet, whose work is very beautiful in itself, but suggests no fruitful thought, and is altogether more turned towards the past than towards the future. Courbet's realism frightened the School of his time, but, after all, the School of ten years later had no longer any reason to make itself uneasy about it, since it contained no formal contradiction of its fundamental principles; whilst Manet's realism, in rising to the substitution of *character* for *beauty of proportion* as the aesthetic principle, brought forcibly

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

into question the School and its entire dogmatism. This is the clearest meaning of Manet's work itself, that is the reason why—an issue of Courbet's, which again came from the former masters—it has widened its range infinitely and has been able to create a new era, whereas the audacity of Courbet bore only upon certain points of minor importance. And that is, finally, why academic art has for a long time contested Manet's subjects more than his technique: it was well aware of the fact that Manet's technique was classical at the bottom, but that the real danger lay in this new position of the problem of the Beautiful.

One of the numerous consequences of Manet's work—and not the least of them—has been the creation of modern illustration, as we see it to-day, intimately associated with the psychology of the novel. The romanticist illustrators had been brilliant men. Tony Johannot, Célestin Nanteuil and others culminated in the beautiful, passionate and decorative work of Gustave Doré, who realized true marvels in his *Don Quixote*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Hell*, and *Spain*, though he was but an indifferent painter and sculptor. But the realistic and characteristic form of illustration dates from Manet—and from Daumier. Honoré Daumier had only been known as a great satirical draughtsman, as a cruel observer of his time, and as a political caricaturist of tragic fancy, when quite recently his paintings were, so to speak, discovered—a mass of admirable small canvases which he painted in the rare moments of leisure left to him by his occupation as lithographer. These canvases are such as to place Daumier among the great painters of the nineteenth century. They contain all his gifts of bitter and profound observation, all the mastery of his drawings, to which they add the attractions of rich and intense colour, and a knowledge of values worthy of Rembrandt and Goya. This feeling for values is so strong in Daumier, that it succeeds in making him a colourist who produces an impression with three or four tones. Daumier must be looked upon as a great, isolated figure, that watched with complete independence the passing of Courbet and Manet, and summed up in himself a great part of their merits. For his knowledge of expression, his faculty of synthesis, his lofty vision and the generosity of his ideas, Daumier will be held to have been the ancestor of the recent psychological illustration. His types of lawyers



H. Daumier.

THE THIEVES AND THE DONKEY.

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and of the middle classes will always remain the most cutting satires on the Third Estate.

Physiological realism had found another precursor in the draughtsman Constantin Guys, Baudelaire's friend. We shall come across Baudelaire's name in the middle of the nineteenth century in connection with all the great innovators, whom he either discovered or defended, from Delacroix to Berlioz and Wagner, from Guys to Gavarni and Manet. Guys was the first to portray, in his light and delicate water-colours, the nervous elegance of the Parisian women of his time, with an acute-



DEGAS

THE DANCING LESSON—PASTEL

ness of modernist vision that Gavarni did not possess to the same extent. Gavarni, in his charming and brilliant drawings, reveals himself more as a successor of the eighteenth-century illustrators, of Saint-Aubin, of the younger Moreau, of Eisen, and of Debucourt. His fancy is more often gay than bitter; it is fond of festivities and disguises of stories of *moeurs galantes*. Among modern draughtsmen Chéret is a nearer approach to Gavarni than Forain, whose sombre spirit can be traced straight back to Daumier, whilst his style is derived from Manet and Degas. Gavarni, however, should, like Guys, be placed among the precursors of present-day illustration, if only for the character of truth which he constantly mingled with his delightful fantasy. But I must now return to chronological order, by speaking of a very great painter who has also

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

exercised great, though indirect, influence upon the illustration of to-day, by supporting with his masterpieces the theory of the *beauty of character*.

M. Edgar Degas, a friend of Manet, Claude Monet, and Renoir, is generally counted among the impressionists. He has, on the whole, been their companion in arms. Nevertheless I have thought it better to treat him in this chapter, because his work has almost nothing in common with that of the impressionists, except from the point of view of modern character and realism, which is precisely the subject of this chapter. He is, except in his recent landscapes, a stranger to the impressionist theories on colour, and his work, far more minute, far deeper and less brilliant, finds its chief interest in the intensity of his psychological gifts. There is in M. Degas an absolutely classical temperament. Ignored by the great public, and admired by the pick of the art lovers of Europe, this enigmatical artist is far more closely related to Ingres by the masterly beauty of his drawing, than one might think. As a painter, he knows how to play with curious, veiled harmonies of extreme delicacy. But he is a draughtsman in the first place. He began with a series of small canvases of disconcerting perfection, which recall sometimes Holbein, and more frequently certain Tuscan primitives, by their concentrated expression, their severe colour, and their analytical power. Then he set himself to the study of contemporary life. His work may be divided into several series, the three most important of which are the race-courses, the dancers, and the women at their toilette. On these modern themes Degas has developed the most astonishing observations. His race-course scenes are grouped in so true, so unforeseen, so living a manner, that they deserve admiration. In light landscapes with pale skies he amuses himself with noting the movements of horses and jockeys and the reflections of the sun on the coats of thoroughbreds, with a mastery that is always disguised under apparent ease. These pictures are absolutely different from all analogous works, notably from Géricault's beautiful equine studies; they have a style, a *verve*, a nervousness all their own. The famous series of dancers, studied from nature, forms a kind of grand poem that might be called "The Life of the Dancers." Degas has spent much time behind the scenes in the rehearsal rooms of the Paris Opera, following the dancers from their exercises to the foyer and to the stage. Here are revealed his admirable gifts of observation, and here also



Degas.

THE CHIROPODIST.

THE REALISTS AND THE CHARACTERISTS

appears the style of drawing so personal to him. His is a sort of irony which almost touches upon caricature, without ever falling into it, and of which he has sometimes struck the note in some small pastels, notably in that minute masterpiece, *The Supers*, at the Luxembourg Gallery. He has, beyond all, a bitter, disillusioned spirit. His life is mysterious; morose and misanthropical enough, he is renowned for his epigrams. It is difficult to say what secret deceptions, what ruffled susceptibilities lie at the bottom of the sarcasms of so estimable an artist. However this may be, Degas's painting is that of a man who has looked upon



DEGAS
THE LESSON IN THE FOYER

life with exceptional intensity, who has perhaps found it ugly, but has transformed this ugliness into beauty, through loving the True as the most certain beauty. He notes the thinness, the heavy forms, the low types of the modern dancer, instead of making her "pretty," as the School would not fail to do. He paints the girl of the suburbs, the girl from whom the modern *corps de ballet* is generally recruited. But he puts her also in a cloud of gauze, and spangles her with light, as she really is in the illusion of the gala-scene. He draws lovingly her fatiguing, ungainly poses in the exercise room in the light of cold window panes. And he allows us to be present at the metamorphosis of these chrysalises

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into butterflies in the evening. Thus he bequeaths to the future an incomparable document of our time, in the same sense as the Greek bas-reliefs take us back to the Panathenaea. In this series Degas gives an exact statement of his *drawing in movement*, does not hesitate to falsify imperceptibly the proportions, in order to obtain a stronger expression of gesture, and achieves a pleasing mastery. He draws with the solidity of sculpture, suggesting the volume, and has at the same time the sharp clearness, the power of grasping life, that may be found in the prints of Hokusai. Degas is linked with Ingres, in spite of apparent differences, through that superb mastery which produces the essential impression of the word *classicism*, that of sureness, of certainty.

His series of nude women is no less beautiful. In this he carries his psychology of contemporary woman equally far, and shows a mastery equal to that of Ingres, and yet opposed to the precepts of the School. He paints the woman who is no longer accustomed to a state of nudity, the undressed woman with her awkward movements. He notes the blemishes, the marks of nervous complaints, the impressions left upon the flesh by the garments, the epidermis shivering under cold water. He amuses himself with a thousand remarks made by his terrible spirit of analysis and caustic raillery. But he is never without style; he never sinks to the level of caricature, and finds an almost Baudelairian beauty in everything he sees. Never has the beauty of truth been put into better light. A woman by Degas is the product of the psychology of a period and of a race. It would be vain to expect from this artist the broad all-comprising visions and the lyricism of a Besnard: but what he does see, will not be seen more completely by anybody else. His is a concentrated mind, as gifted for physiology and for the analytical novel as for painting; a kind of La Bruyère or Claude Bernard who can paint. It is this faculty of *attention* that has enabled Degas to create the supreme degree of *characterist* beauty, and to show how the faculties of expression may completely modify the combination and use of proportions, leaving them at the same time as harmonious as if on the search for purely proportional beauty.

Degas is also responsible for some strange dream-landscapes, real colour-music, in which this contemplative spirit seems to have found recreation by giving free play to his fancy. He delighted in combining



Bastien-Lepage.

THE HAYFIELD.

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technical subtleties, in mixing pastel with etching, or oil-colour with crayon, with the minute care of a chemist. He has this trait in common with Mr. Whistler. His vision may be said to be a little limited, a little melancholy. He has not, like Manet, touched upon everything, nor, like Besnard, combined a lyrical fancy with realism and tried to create a social style expressive of the science and the morals of the time; but in his own domain he is more perfect than anybody else.

Close to this transfigurator of realism must be placed his successors. The impressionists are all realists, but their technique more than anything else will compel me to reserve for them a special chapter. We shall find among those who have been particularly absorbed by realism the curious painter-engraver Raffaëlli, with his series of popular types of Paris and its outskirts, his expressive suburban landscapes, his street scenes, his portraits of the lower middle class, his bright Parisian aspects, his feeling for crowds and for picturesque winter, and also his spirited flower studies, and his etchings for Huysman's books on certain quarters of Paris. Raffaëlli is a substitute for Degas, like, by the way, all modern draughtsmen. The same may be said of Forain, who began by painting some excellent little pictures in the manner of his master, and devoted himself, in the large series of drawings which have made his name famous, to the study of debauchees, loose women, the undercurrent of Paris life, and particularly the vices of the *bourgeoisie* and of the Semitic race. Forain, as I have said, has drawn from Daumier his bitter and dismal legends, but he has found the complete formula for his broad and diversified drawing in Manet and Degas. He is a Degas, pushed on to caricature.

But Forain is our immediate contemporary. Before coming to the present day, I must refer to the crisis of error which realism passed between 1875 and 1885 and which is still in existence, but is no longer of any importance as regards the history of painting. The disturbance produced by Manet's work was so great, that a certain number of artists of timid temperament felt its influence, and tried, without breaking off their connection with academic art, to assimilate its vision. The most interesting of these painters was Bastien-Lepage, whose sincere works were influenced also by Millet. His *Hayfield* made a sensation as a daring work, painted in the open air, and withal devoid of Manet's

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“eccentricities.” He painted numerous portraits, elegant in composition and true in observation. His best work is certainly a *Joan of Arc listening to the Voices*, who has really a beautiful, mystical, ardent and passionate expression, of the kind a Rossetti might have found. But Bastien-Lepage found himself placed between boldness and timidity, and remained hesitating, without daring to take sides, owing to his excessively scrupulous character. If his work is such that it cannot well be neglected, he must be held responsible for the small school of realists who only drew their inspiration from it to become more and more enamoured of a perfection of detail, a realism which had for its ideal the painted photograph, which had neither life, nor style, nor grandeur, its only merit being sterile cleverness. One of the most overrated painters of this century, Meissonier, who was overwhelmed with honours, who sold his pictures at scandalous prices and has a statue in the garden of the Louvre, had already set the example of this shallow realism, in the belief that he was imitating the Dutch small masters who are so savoury, so full of life, so devoid of pretension. Like the academic painters, he had shown, in his domain of military art, what false perfection may come to, by painting most deceptively the buttons of a uniform, but never suggesting the solidity of the soil or the transparency of the skies, that form the setting of his figures. He understood no better how to suggest different substances, and, in spite of the most violently-contorted attitudes of his figures, he had not the gift of making them live. “Everything here is of iron, except the cuirasses,” said Manet one day, in front of a charge of cuirassiers by Meissonier, and this was the most just and subtle criticism of his art. Bastien-Lepage’s disciples lost even their master’s qualities of taste and expression, and arrived at an art of pure imitation, a kind of academic art applied to modern costume. There is no need to mention even their names.

But fortunately the great spirit of Manet and Degas sufficed to save realism from falling into this rut. Some fine painters carry on their ideas. Special mention should be made of M. Roll, who seems to have transferred Zola’s ideas into painting, and has evinced, in a series of great pictures dealing with war, strikes, peasants and workmen, the temperament of a colourist fond of strength and health. M. Dagnan-Bouveret, who will be found again in the chapter on the “Intimists,” painted at



Theodore Klotz

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

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the beginning of his career some solid and serious canvases of sober realism. A more than honourable position must be accorded to Théodore Ribot. He proves himself the issue of Hals, Courbet, and certain Spaniards, in his biblical scenes, painted in a black manner, with robust nudes put into strong light, in contrast with deep shadows. At another time he seems to remember Chardin in his numerous small kitchen scenes; then, again, Courbet and Millet in his fine figures of old women in mourning. Ribot's life and work will remain a fine example. Finally I must mention our best modern draughtsmen: Jeanniot, Steinlen and Paul Renouard, who understand the beauty of character; Lepère, who is the first wood-engraver of the present day, and who, as painter, engraver, and pastellist, has evidenced a most beautiful talent; Henri Rivière, a decorator influenced by the Japanese; Henri Guérard, who is imbued with Manet's art; and, last, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who died prematurely. He was the painter of Parisian vice. He brought into his work the gifts of a master-draughtsman and a curious mixture of the decorative feeling of the Japanese with the precision, the disposition, and the satire of Degas, with even more misanthropical acuteness—a grin rather than a smile—until he reaches the extreme limits of psychological character.

Such is the development of the history of realism in the nineteenth century. It begins with the simple desire for truth and study from nature, which the masters of yore had felt; and under Manet's and Degas's impulsion becomes an entirely new vision, imbued with the striving after psychological characterization that dominates the contemporary novel. The term *realism* gives way to the term *characterism*. It is no longer a question of the copying, of the more or less clever imitation of objects and beings, but of their psychical interpretation, of the quest of an emotional beauty, opposed to the emotion born of the sight of pure proportion. It is, in fine, the question of a dynamic art, as opposed to a static art; and that is how realism, transposed and transformed, will be able—as we shall see later on—to mingle with intimism and contain more real spirituality than academic art.

CHAPTER IV

THE PORTRAIT PAINTERS SINCE INGRES

Resemblance in portraiture : the style and position of the portrait in modern painting.—Ingres, Chassériau, Couture, Baudry, Delaunay, Regnault, Henner, Cabanel, Benjamin-Constant, Carolus-Duran, Bonnat, Ricard, Fantin-Latour, Manet, Renoir, Carrière, Besnard, some modern painters.

THE problem of the portrait in art is connected with the problem of resemblance, one of the mysteries of painting—the bond between plastic art and psychology.

Resemblance is an obscure expression, to which the multitude gives an immediate and commonplace sense. There are several degrees of resemblance. The most common is the easiest to attain and is well known: it consists in arranging the most obvious features of a sitter, the features that any chance observer will have noted and remembered; and the unanimous cry: “How like him, how like her!” confirms this resemblance. But it is illusory and vulgar, just because it gathers up all that is external and without truly distinctive character. It does not reveal the being; it only shows what can be seen at the first glance; it betrays nothing of the inner life. This kind of likeness fills the exhibitions in the shape of innumerable pictures that are decently painted, but signify scarcely more than a coloured photograph.

The second degree of resemblance is the revelation of one of the model's significant and special features, which has been made to stand out from the features that everybody has been able to retain. The multitude only want these latter, and the more a portrait is limited to the reproduction of what the most indifferent observer can take in at a glance, the greater they will find the resemblance. The second degree begins to be a difficult study, the study of psychological character. Few painters attain to it, and never without effort. According to the degree of their observation and of the things to which they pay attention, can be gauged the degree of their intelligence, of their soul, quite independ-



Fantin-Latour.

MANET'S STUDIO: PORTRAITS OF MANET, ZOLA, MONET, BAZILLE, DURANTZ, RENOIR AND BRACQUEMOND.

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ently of their manual skill. The models of bad painters pose like inert objects, with the passiveness of a photograph, and with a conventional expression that reduces the face to the importance of the garment. But if the artist attacks the study of the second degree of resemblance, he meets in his model a peculiar resistance which is well known to all true analysts. The artist is a man who has the right to examine with an insistence and penetration, which decorum forbids to anybody else, and one may say that only a painter and a lover have the right of looking upon a woman. The model revolts, without even knowing it, against this intense analysis. Woman has a certain modesty mixed with coquetry, and a man hides his thoughts; both have the instinct of closing themselves, of offering to this inquisitive glance that weighs heavily upon them, not their true expression, but the expression they wish to have. This mute and impassioned struggle permits the gifted and sagacious artist to discover, by a kind of slow hypnotism, the real expressions of the model's psychology. In every being there are an infinite number of beings that can be reduced to three classes: there is the being as we see it, the being as it believes itself to be, and the being as it wishes to appear. Opposed to it is what the painter thinks of it. As regards the being as it actually is, nobody knows it; what is called resemblance oscillates between these diverse hypotheses, and is, so to say, the geometrical locus.

Thus the painter extracts from the being he sees, a second person who lives in it, and it is through the psychological study of this second person—who is less apparent and more real—that he understands the diverse inflections the sentiments give to the mask of flesh which they animate. This transposition is already beyond the comprehension of the ordinary person. It is no longer a copy, but a personal interpretation, and in touching upon this moral and profound resemblance, upon this superior truth, the painter is often taxed by the multitude with “making a bad likeness,” because he has grasped and fixed a revealing sign which had not been noticed by superficial people. Indifferent portraits always “resemble” in the eyes of the multitude, and that is all they are supposed to do. This alone proves how difficult it is to define the idea contained in that famous word. “It would not do,” said a clever woman, “to have the same portrait for one's lover and for one's steward.” To

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resemble—what does this mean? To resemble what? To resemble what the chance observer remembers of you, or what your intimates know of you, or what you think of yourself? The more the notion is examined, the more it will fall into subdivisions. The wisest plan is, to leave it to the painter, and to say: “You are an analyst and draughtsman, you have studied life and scrutinized reality under the surface: tell me what I am, or, at least, what you see in me.” That is how one speaks to the doctor or to the thought-reader. And then the painter determines the resemblance through the interpretation. He may study one expression which seems to him essential (the most frequent or the rarest, according to his choice), and sacrifice all the others to it; he may try to establish an average of the principal expressions; he may finally (as the painter Helleu has done recently at the request of a great lady), live with his model and treat her in a series of rapid sketches which, in turning them over, will furnish him with a kind of cinematography of her character and soul. Whichever it be, it will not be “Mr. and Mrs. N.,” but “How Mr. and Mrs. N. appear to Mr. Whistler, Mr. Herkomer, or M. Besnard.”

And this leads us up to the third degree, the degree that is only attained by the great masters. It is the degree where the artist generalizes his observations upon a being, and where he suggests in a face not only the individual, but also its heredity, its race, its physiological blemishes, its future illnesses, and where he suggests, above all, what this transitory individual has in common with humanity in its permanent laws. Lionardo, Velasquez, Rembrandt, and in our own day sometimes Prudhon, Ricard, and M. Eugène Carrière, have reached this supreme power, which unites exactness of physiology with the most exalted ideality, and which succeeds in blending the three degrees of resemblance. In general, painters, and particularly painters of women, obey a preconceived idea. All their portraits resemble each other, because they have in their mind a vision of the woman of their time, which their personal taste or their artistic tendency suggests to them, and they manage to reduce all the women who pass before them to the type of their predilection. They excel in painting a certain expression and a certain attitude, and impose them on all alike: that is what is called their style; and instead of their modifying this style according to the sitter, people

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go to them to be painted in the style adopted by the artists, if they think that this style will suit them and that they will benefit by it. Such an error is the result of a low and altogether commercial conception of portraiture, and there is many a portrait to be seen, in which the head has been sketched in a few hours, whilst models have posed for the figure and hands—for the hands that are so full of expression!—so that the sitter should not be inconvenienced. Celebrated painters do not blush for an artistic improbity of this kind. But even leaving aside this deplorable point of view, and speaking only of the “feminist” painters, it will be noticed that the portrait of a woman is nearly always a portrait of the different forms of man’s desire, translated by the painters. The likeness of a man is the portrait of his thought. Man has position, force, and a profession. His costume does not matter; his head reacts upon the beholder and imposes upon him his views. The likeness of a woman is, on the contrary, the portrait of the desires and esteem we put into it. It is a passive and mute idol that expects to be decked in jewels. She does not react; it is we who embellish her and are impressed by all the homage which we ourselves have paid her. The result is, that across the mist of the ages we can count up successively Botticelli’s woman, Titian’s, Watteau’s, Fragonard’s, Rubens’s, Goya’s, Prudhon’s, Gainsborough’s, Besnard’s—and yet they were all portraits, but what remains of them is above all the idea these great painters formed of the eternal and unconscious feminine.

It is, therefore, especially in portraits of men, where the model’s force is as active as the painter’s, that the reconciliation of the three degrees of resemblance can attain the highest union of psycho-physiology and esthetic interpretation. And this is why a fine portrait is more assured of remaining, of contributing to the painter’s fame, than the most ingenious composition, the sense of which is subject to change. Every face is the hereditary symbol of a race and, behind this race, of the whole of humanity; and it can never finish telling its secrets, because there is an interchange between it and every being that approaches a new and inexhaustible electric force.

It was natural that the nineteenth century, which has transformed realism to such an extent, should thus face the problem of resemblance, and that is why I have considered it advisable to make a rapid summary

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of the psychological origins of the question before examining the most individual contemporary portrait painters. The preceding reflections will guide us in estimating their merits. In a century in which costume has gradually fallen into desuetude, to end in a general black which leaves only the head and hands to mark the personality, the intense investigation of psychological expression was bound to reach its maximum of concentration in the effort, if not in the result. And if the century cannot boast of such grand virtuosi as the preceding centuries, if it has had neither a Titian, nor a Lionardo, nor a Velasquez, nor a Rembrandt, it has at least in Ricard, Fantin-Latour, Besnard, Carrière and Degas, found men capable of clearly expressing the face of modern man, with its style, its restlessness, its suppressed or feverish emotion, and the exact degree of its heredity. Nineteenth-century portraiture has included some beautiful masterpieces, inspired by the desire of reading behind appearances, of creating a second reality, deeper than that which is visible, rich in suggestions, free of concern for decoration, and entirely absorbed in concern for psychological synthesis. This second reality, moreover, existed already, quite as sober and condensed, in Titian, in Tintoretto, in Bronzino and Bellini, in all those painters of young, ardent, and severe faces rigidly framed in black, who make such a strange and pleasing pause before the advent of the sumptuous and sensual Venetian painting that was demanded by the taste of the second Renaissance. We might point out many analogies between that generation and ours: both were passionate and self-restrained; both were thrown into commotion by recent tragedies, and lived in anticipation of tragedies even more terrible; both had the same contempt for ornament and the same love of the black simplicity of costume, that Hamlet-like simplicity which wears mourning for its own vanity.

Ingres's portraits appear at the beginning of the nineteenth century like quiet and strong masterpieces, in a style which is at the same time noble and familiar, with a purity of attitude which is mixed with a certain sensuality, the sensuality experienced by the terrible dogmatist who, it appears, could not paint a woman with bare arms, without getting up to go and kiss them. The extraordinary strength of these portraits lies not only in their drawing, which is worthy of the greatest masters; it lies in the exact adaptation of their style to the social characteristics of



Ingres.

MADAME RIVIÈRE.

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the models. Through this, the portraits resemble not only the individual person but the sitter's whole caste. Thus the portrait of Bertin is the symbol for the entire liberal *bourgeoisie*, and that of Madame de Senonnes is the representative portrait of an entire aristocracy accepting the present state of things and making the best of it without deteriorating. Looking upon the portrait of Bertin we feel first that everybody must recognize him, owing to the perfect physiological construction of his slightest features; then, that it is certainly the image of himself which Bertin must have wished to leave to the world, and the attitude he took and believed to be really his; finally, it is so much the symbol of a caste that this portrait alone would tell us better than twenty novels what the liberal *bourgeois* of 1845 must have been like. Big volumes of memoirs could not give us the amount of sociological information which is contained in and suggested by a glance at this admirable portrait. The likeness of Madame de Senonnes is equally significant. It is not only a marvel as regards the surprisingly clever arrangement of drapery and the subtlety in the execution of the minutest detail, without injury to the breadth of style of the whole; it is a work which condenses more than a novel could sum up, and is, perhaps, the one in which Ingres has most forcibly realized that characterization which his theories contradicted and represented as the enemy of formal beauty. Fortunately for his fame this great man applied his theories only to his mythological painting, which is already moribund. "I can follow him no more," writes Chassériau; "he has turned to the past, which suits his genius marvellously well, but we have to think of the future." Through his portraits Ingres has thrust himself upon this future. One thing only they lack, or might, at least, have had added to them: the study of atmosphere, the ambient mystery of every living creature. Ingres's portraits are absolutely dry; they do not create mystery, but reflection and psychological curiosity. They are intense, but they cannot move the beholder. It was reserved to Ricard, Carrière, Besnard and Whistler, to find this emotion, to create this new era of portraiture, by returning more or less to the example of Prudhon, the suave and magnetic Prudhon who is related to Reynolds and Lawrence, and who shows so much *morbidezza* and charm, preserving all the while his severe, true, and impeccable mastery.

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The few portraits left by Chassériau—those which he painted of himself and particularly that admirable portrait of his two sisters, which so strongly impressed the visitors to the Exhibition of 1900—show him influenced by Ingres, and secure him a position among the eminent portrait painters of the nineteenth century. They are strong and sober works, with dull lights, beautiful blacks, and attitudes that are at the same time simple and proud; and while deeply imbued with the classic conception, they are by no means examples of the School. I think I have sufficiently insisted in the preceding chapters upon the difference which exists between classicism and the academic spirit. Portraiture will supply numerous opportunities for speaking of the academic painters in more eulogistic terms than those used with reference to imaginative works. The most interesting canvases they have left us are of this order.

The most significant painter from this point of view is unquestionably Couture, who occupied an important place between the first and the second romanticism, and was, with Ingres, the most authoritative personality who had to face the first beginnings of Courbet's realism. Couture's was an atrabilious character and a narrow mind, but he cannot be denied the most solid technical qualities. His compositions are indifferent. Even the far too famous *Romans of the Decadence* looks to-day like an illustration unduly enlarged to the immense proportions the artist has given it. But his portraits are most remarkable. They evince serious knowledge and a realism, somewhat sombre, but of assistance in the strengthening of expression. Amongst them may be found some very fine pieces. Couture's portraits have nothing original in style or colour; they are *résumés* after the old masters, but they are the works of a patient, conscientious and honest worker who was capable of power. Some of them do not suffer if placed by the side of Courbet's faces.

The portraits left by Paul Baudry deserve even more eulogy. His reputation was of the highest, and though, perhaps, his portraits contributed less towards it than his compositions, they have a far greater value. The decorations of the Paris Opera and some mythological works bear witness to indisputable skill, but also to certain tricks and a preoccupation with affected elegance, which correspond too closely to the official bad taste of the Second Empire. Their pink and blue colour is mellow and insipid, without having the qualities of brilliancy of

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Boucher or the Venetian decorative artists by whom it was inspired. On the other hand, Paul Baudry's qualities of indisputable distinction assert themselves in his portraits, notably in the splendid figure of a man, at the Luxembourg Gallery. And this distinction does not exclude energy of drawing and values; the fineness of the colouring, which proves a very subtle eye, is happily supported by this very precise drawing, and the general carriage of these portraits is excellent. The future will say as much of the portraits painted by Elie Delaunay, who is to-day unjustly neglected. Delaunay also tried composition more or less happily; he brought to it a dramatic imagination which makes us often regret the interference of the prejudices of the School with this talent so capable of great things. His *Plague in Rome* remains an interesting canvas, in which a certain tragic beauty, akin to Delacroix, inspires the sulphurous colouring and the



MILLET

PORTRAIT OF LITTLE ANTOINETTE FEUARDENT

[Photograph—Braun, Clément & Co.]

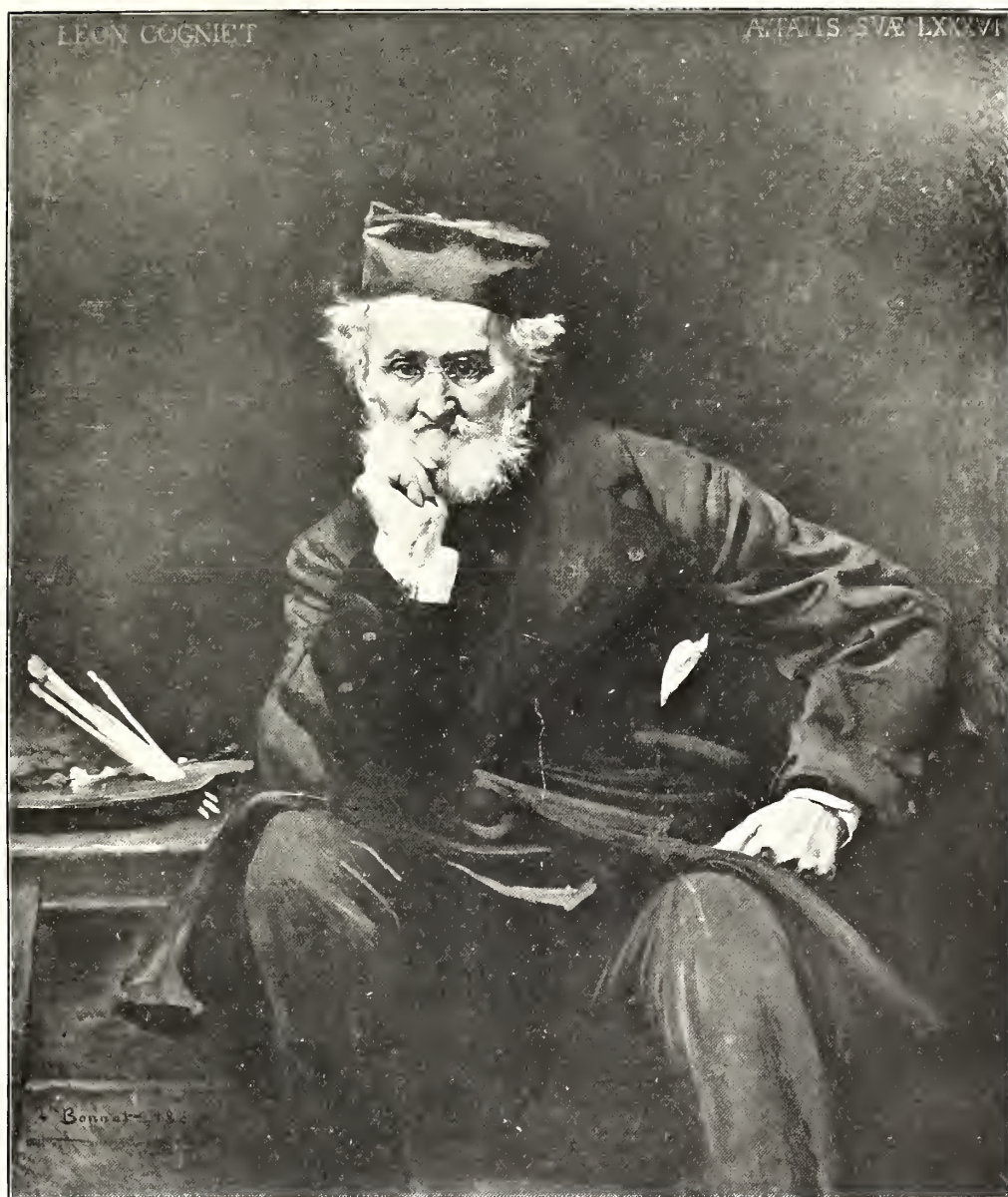
violent contrasts between lights and shadows. But his portraits will constitute Elie Delaunay's real claim to fame. At the exhibition of women's portraits held a few years ago at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, which was admirably representative, the portrait of *Madame veuve Bizet* by Delaunay appeared as one of the most fascinating of the century, if not for its somewhat theatrical attitude, at least for its superb technique, and it immeasurably surpassed all the exhibits of the most renowned academic painters. There is no doubt that Delaunay

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might have succeeded in restoring to the School its compromised prestige and infusing new blood into it, had he been more detached from its direct influence, more firmly decided to find original expression, than it was permitted him to achieve under its material sway.

The court portrait painter of the Second Empire, Winterhalter, who had an enormous reputation, has sunk to-day most justly and definitely into oblivion. On looking again at his finical works, one can only be surprised that they could ever have procured him, even for the moment, a reputation on a level with men like Baudry and Delaunay, or again like the venerable Hébert, who still continues to send to the Salons the exquisite portraits which nobody would ascribe to a nonagenarian. The famous painter of the *Mal'aria*, which has been popularized as an engraving, is one of the painters of whom the School has the most authentic reason to be proud. Hébert is the author of mystical canvases full of tender feeling, of refined conception, and of an expression fed on the recollections of certain Lombard primitives, but he is also a portrait painter of great merit, a sympathetic, elegant and pure interpreter of woman, a classicist impressed by romanticism, and sometimes more closely related than one might think to Chassériau and to Gustave Moreau. He has the feeling for mysterious atmosphere that Prudhon has illustrated, and certain rarities of colour that have conferred upon him at times a most attractive distinction.

Regnault, another prematurely extinguished glory of the School, who, by the way, would sooner or later have disowned the *alma mater*, has left us in his equestrian portrait of *Juan Prim* a proof that he would have figured among the masters of this art. In continuing the examination of the official painters and their rehabilitation through portraiture, we come to Cabanel. I have already stated what faults compromised in the eyes of posterity the overrated reputation of this tedious mythologist, of this historical painter without truth, without emphasis and without life: his portraits of women carry on the same defects. But at least the soft modelling, the mannered grace, the thin paint and the excessive elaboration of details may frequently find their excuse in the representation of women with luxurious garments, smiling and conventional faces and amiably *banal* expressions. Cabanel has thus sometimes succeeded in adapting his faults to his subjects, and in attaining a certain worldly



L. Bonnat.

PORTRAIT OF LEON COGNIE.

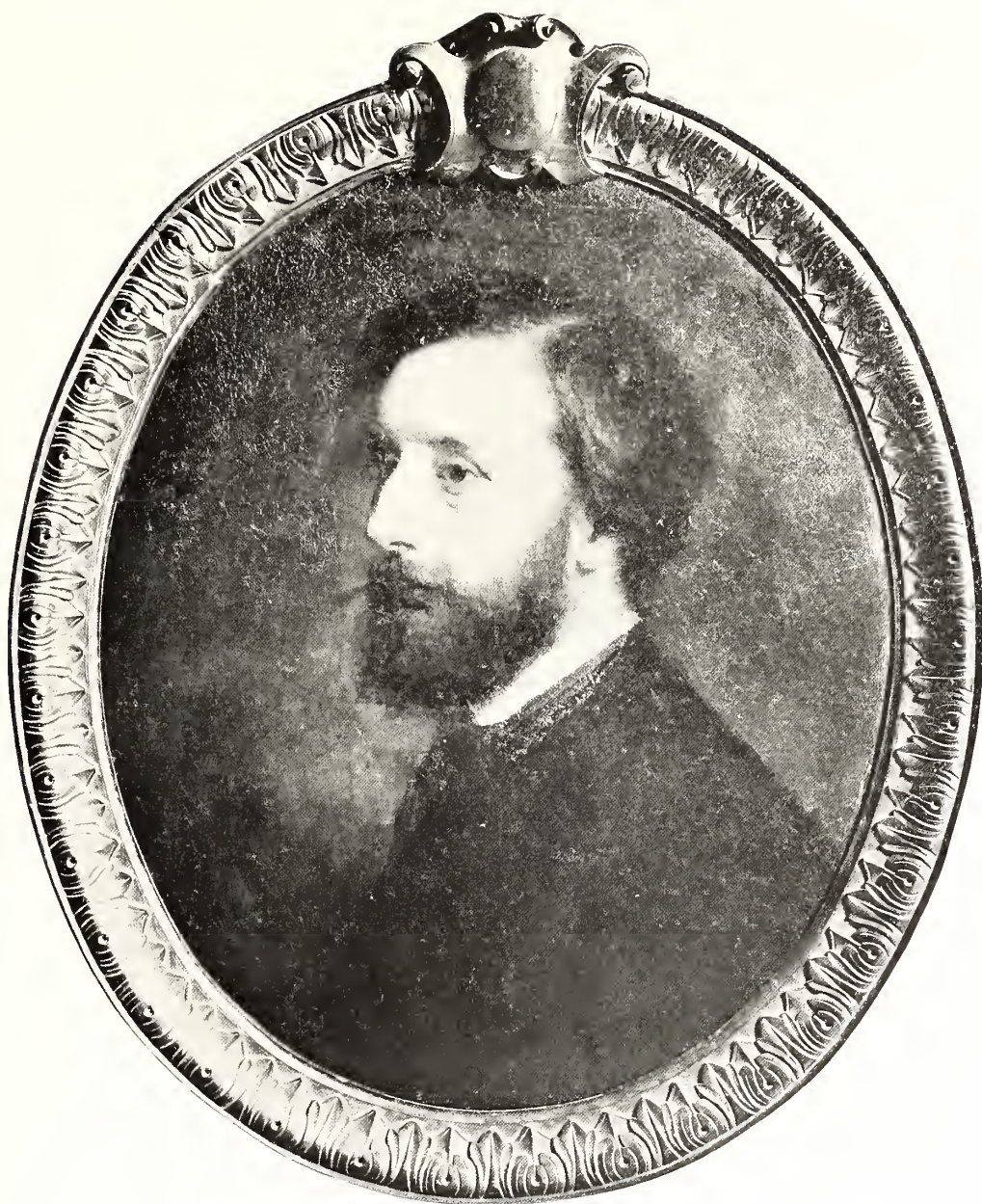
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allurement, a superficial femininity which responded sufficiently well to the requirements of his sitters, and in which his technical knowledge found full scope. If he was always incapable of attaining real breadth of style, the attraction of profound reality, mystery and originality in lighting; if he yielded too frequently to the desire of pleasing and not fatiguing his models, by finishing the hands and figures from paid models, we must at least be thankful to Cabanel for having kept his portraits in a low harmony which has nothing of gaudiness or vulgarity, and reserves them at least outward distinction. The same may be said of M. Jules Lefebvre, who, after having painted divers pictures of *Truth Rising from the Well*, *The Evening Star*, and other allegories of the most deplorable kind, has turned with far more luck towards portraiture. He has even achieved the painting of some very fine portraits, like the *Yvonne* at the Luxembourg Gallery, which is a very interesting piece.

Henner has painted but few portraits in comparison with his innumerable nudes, but they are generally very beautiful. His blacks, blues, and Venetian reds can be found again in them. They are not so much psychological portraits as complete effects; but with what charm does he see his visions! Here more even than in his nudes his kinship with Prudhon breaks forth, and he is one of the first who have resolutely striven after the importance of ambient atmosphere and of the poetry which springs from it. With the portrait of his wife, painted two years before his death, Puvis de Chavannes proved that his genius might have triumphed here as everywhere. The great merit of Ferdinand Gaillard's portraits will be recognized later. Except a few engravings, in which his undisputed mastery among all contemporary etchers reveals itself, everything that he has done has been forgotten by an iniquitous fate. But names have been known to come back from even deeper shades. Whilst we have to wait for an exhibition to put Gaillard into his post of glory, one masterpiece of his, the portrait of a Bishop at the Luxembourg Gallery, remains to prove that he was a characterist painter of very real beauty, an intense observer and a passionate evocator of expressive life, whose perfection of skill was never cold, whose style never commonplace. Ferdinand Gaillard was not understood during his life, and forgotten after his death: from every point of view he deserves to be credited as one of the most conscientious and most learned artists of his century.

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In M. Dagnan-Bouveret's quiet and delicate portraits may be found again the qualities which have made the reputation of his Breton and religious convases. In the work of Ferdinand Humbert, distinguished and worthy of esteem, the portraits are what everybody will agree in preferring. A little pale, a little undecided, they evoke, in their fine gray harmonies, the works of Gainsborough, and contrast favourably at the modern Salons with the mass of gaudy portraits to be found there. Some of M. François Flameng's portraits have the same merit. Finally, I must bring this enumeration to an end by speaking of the three portrait painters who have the greatest repute in the fashionable and official circles of the last few years. Benjamin Constant is lately dead. He was the idol of the fashionable world, and it is just to say, that he painted it with a virtuosity denuded of depth, but not of charm and vigour. He advanced towards perfection, moreover, unceasingly, and his last exhibited portrait was perhaps his best work. That of his sons is a remarkable picture, and the likeness he painted of Queen Victoria is, on the whole, a happy find in the necessarily sterile and ungrateful *genre* of official portraiture. Benjamin Constant had more vivacity than real science. His drawing is too often found to be inaccurate and inconsistent, if subjected to careful examination. He was far too productive and not always happy in the choice of his harmonies; but he is none the less an appreciable painter, one of the best who have issued from academic art, to which he added a free desire for modernity. Carolus-Duran is more the painter of the rich *bourgeoisie*. He drapes his sitters in velvet of the most violent colour, and delights in making the polish of the boots and the pearls of the necklets sparkle with annoying insistency in a spirit of false luxury designed to delude the *bourgeoisie*, who are incapable of understanding the somewhat mysterious and always veiled taste of true elegance. Carolus-Duran, who began with some very serious and solid works, notably with the beautiful *Lady with the Glove* at the Luxembourg, a picture of real distinction, has done nothing but lose in harmony and style what he thought to gain in brilliancy. He is simple enough to believe, it is said, that he attains to the colouring of the great Venetians, and he has even been unwise enough to give the name of *The Blue Boy* to a mediocre portrait of a child heavily dressed in blue velvet, as if he pretended to compete with Gainsborough's delicious and



Gustave Ricard.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST.

THE PORTRAIT PAINTERS SINCE INGRES

celebrated masterpiece. Nevertheless Carolus-Duran's first productions have to be reckoned with, and in those of to-day we must recognize incontestable qualities, flesh of a cool tone, living glances, a vivacious gait, and a brutal but clever method of treating materials. These brilliant effigies contain no thought, but well express the superficial personages of modern plutocracy with their naïve ostentation. They are, in fine, the works of a man of talent, and would not be criticised severely, like those of a good many other painters of equal merit, were it not that they daily receive disproportionate praise, and that the expression "great painters" is indiscriminately applied to men who have invented nothing, who will not be reckoned with seriously by the future, and who are only feeble pupils by the side of the Venetians, of Goya, or of Prudhon.

Léon Bonnat, finally, is by preference the painter of the official world. His admirers themselves agree in deploring the ungraceful heaviness of his feminine portraits, and admit that his compositions, of which I have already spoken, are without any interest. These faults can be found again in Bonnat's official portraits. The backgrounds are of a uniform dark brown, without air and without light. The heads jump out, as though they were lighted from within; the dresses are hard and unpleasant; the technique is altogether rugous and brutal. But, having freely stated these faults, we must also admit that there is a great force of sincere truthfulness in these portraits. Bonnat confines himself to the first degree of resemblance; he does not search for the soul; he does not suggest; he restricts himself to copying the physiology, to constructing coarsely the human framework, and to reproducing the flesh. But he does so with precision and with honest attention, and succeeds in it. He knows how to paint portraits which correspond with everyone's idea of the sitters. Thus he made no great effort of imagination in painting Victor Hugo resting on his elbows, with his fingers on his forehead. But it is just this lack of subtlety that has enabled him to produce a more general image than could have been painted by a more subtle and intellectual artist. His portrait of Thiers is a beautiful portrait, and that of Léon Cogniet is equally fine. Some ten more might be quoted from amongst his numerous series, which combine the most solid, if not the most artistic, qualities, and suffice to secure him not fame, but impartial esteem. At a time when the unintelligent imitation of Whistler induces

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too many painters to exhibit as portraits large, summary silhouettes, paying attention to hardly anything but their blurred, inaccurate harmony, Bonnat's conscientious and very accentuated portraits appear almost powerful. They would become insignificant by the side of a Delaunay, if not a Couture, who are much stronger in the same direction and with more taste; but, such as they are, they preserve an undeniable prestige.

The School has thus found in portraiture the opportunity for redeeming the weakness and pomposity of its compositions. It has not surpassed the merit of conscientious knowledge, but that, at least, it has had. It has confined itself to giving the problem of resemblance the solution of the first degree, and portraiture was certainly the *genre* to give the widest scope to its scrupulous technique and its concern for correct execution and minute copying. It is time now to speak of some great artists who, being outside the School, succeeded in finding an original style, getting beyond copying and rising to psychological interpretation, as it was understood by Titian, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Goya, Prudhon, the portrait painters of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries, from Hyacinthe Rigaud and Largillière to La Tour.

Of these Gustave Ricard will perhaps, remain the greatest. Known to the chosen few, and almost forgotten by the multitude, he is regaining his position as one of the masters of modern art, one of those towards whom the group of intimists are eagerly turning. Ricard, whom, together with Monticelli, the Provençal School will count as its most glorious representative, copied Van Dyck and Titian for ten years; then he devoted himself to portraits, of which he painted about two hundred, and died still young in 1873. It may be said that nearly all his portraits are masterpieces. He is the heir of the Venetians and of Prudhon, and foretells Whistler and Carrière. Slowly constructed in the midst of realism and impressionism, his work is dreamy, deep, supremely distinguished and aristocratic, whilst it remains intensely truthful.

It is only just to include his very copies, for they are re-created works. Although they are absolutely faithful, there is nothing servile about them. They recompose the very methods, and reconstruct not only the apparent reality, but the work itself, by means of surprising intuition. But his original portraits are exceptional. Their beauty of



Gustave Ricard.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S MOTHER.

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execution places them in the first rank; Ricard's personality asserts itself in attaining with the greatest ease the supreme end of the problem of resemblance. Edgar Allan Poe, in writing "The Oval Portrait," seems to have foreseen this painting, which he would certainly have admired. Ricard's eye takes in not only the corporeal envelope, but also the soul which he magnetizes and slowly draws into the eyes and upon the lips. In spite of all the natural reticence of the sitter's mask, his fascinated soul is forced to appear. Not only does this magician make no further use of the human face than to write upon it the moment of eternity which becomes incarnate in it, but this face serves him for studying the whole race, the ego of yesterday and the ego of to-morrow; psychologist and poet can lean over these canvases with equal interest. Ricard has noted the momentary organism with its blemishes, with the thousand indefinable marks which prevent one head from being analogous to another, superimposing upon it the soul with its universe of passions which survive the corporeal duration. Such art is the art of a seer. In every portrait by Ricard there may be found a reference to primordial ideologic types. Resemblance is for him the term of comparison between a transitory being and the immanent forces which characterize humanity. We recognize one of his models, even if we did not know it; we have seen the same traits in all the beings we have met, in whom the same passions or the same illnesses are fermenting. This is almost occultism. "Ricard," said a critic and friend of his, "worked often while the model was absent, and at the finish only wanted to see it again to make sure that he was not mistaken. He said then with a most charming *naïveté*: 'I am glad to see how like you are to your portrait.'" It is the saying of a spiritualist who under his outward show of paradox destroys the notion of the *exact* to the benefit of the *true*. This operation of the spirit, which may be called the spiritualization of the external appearance, is more striking in painting, the complexity of which is so little understood by the multitude, than in any other art; it is the true symbolism, and in Ricard it is superb.

His technique is as mysterious as his intuition. It is impossible to know how he worked. His pictures produce a powerful impression of amber colour, of shadows which are at the same time translucent, fiery, and extinct, of deadened vibrations and fugitive sparkling. They seem

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to be painted with crushed jewels, flower-juice, and gold and silver powder. Liquid light envelops the heads and shivers in the backgrounds; delightful and quiet sadness contracts imperceptibly the corners of the mouths, and the *morbidezza* of the eyes is disquieting. The thoughts of this elegant, simple, and gentle solitary with the patrician face will never be accurately known. He is related to Prudhon through his voluptuous half-lights, in which some cold tone, a faded sapphire blue, will suddenly appear; to Reynolds through a masterly knowledge of the sacrifices necessary to concentrate the attention upon a significant point. He may be seen by the side of an Ingres or a Delacroix; he is not inferior to either of them in science, or charm of tone, and he is more stimulating to thought. He is one of the greatest masters of the French school, one of the first portrait painters of modern times, one of those who are bound to experience one of the finest awakenings of public admiration.

I have already spoken of Fantin-Latour. His portraits will count in the first rank of contemporary art. The *Family*, the *Homage to Manet*, the *Homage to Delacroix*, the *Corner of a Table*, and the *Portrait of Manet* are all works that recall the most beautiful traditions of Titian and Rembrandt, through their severe harmony, their grand drawing, their intellectual strength, and their serious science, which is hostile to easy virtuosity. Though he was the companion of the ideas and struggles of the impressionists, Fantin-Latour has not yielded to their excessive leaning towards improvisation and to their love of colour for its own sake. He is more harmonist than colourist, and restricts himself to a few strong amber and black tones scarcely heightened by some jewel or flower. But what science, what real distinction he puts into his work! His pictures have the profound character of the classics; without *éclat*, without brilliant digressions, their noble and pure arrangement captures the first glance, and slowly they reveal a wise divination of the inner life.

I shall only briefly refer to the impressionists in this chapter. These painters may be said to have painted nothing but portraits, since their work is always scrupulously studied from Nature. But if we confine ourselves to portraiture in the generally accepted sense of the word, they have created some very fine works, which would suffice to clear



Fantin Latour.

PORTRAIT OF MANET.

THE PORTRAIT PAINTERS SINCE INGRES

them of the reproach levelled against them, that they are only landscape painters, and that their draughtsmanship is faulty. Degas painted at the beginning of his career some portraits which make one regret that he abandoned this *genre*, in which he might have been a second Ingres. Manet painted many portraits: *Madame Manet*, *Zola*, *Rochefort*, *Antonin Proust*, *Albert Wolff*, *Mallarmé*, *Eva Gonzalès*, and *Desboutin* will count among the most significant works in his broad and living style. Renoir has not failed to give evidence in this *genre*, as in every other, of his capricious genius. His portrait of *Jeanne Samary* is an exquisite work, an admirable symphony in white, rose and gold, a thing of undying charm. Madame Berthe Morisot has left a head of herself which is a masterpiece of vivacity and science, and well apt to remind one that she is the great-granddaughter of Fragonard, for in it may be found the freedom and the life of the beautiful works of the eighteenth century. But the glory of



DEGAS
THE BEGGAR WOMAN

the impressionists does not lie in this special domain, and it cannot be maintained that they have contributed to it a really psychological note. For this we have to come down to the two greatest figure painters of France of the present day, to Eugène Carrière and Albert Besnard.

Carrière's portraits evoke Prudhon, Ricard and Whistler, but without resembling them. They are, above all, mysterious interpretations, evocations of souls. They reach the extreme limits of the art of transposition, and would, in fact, be a dangerous example for anyone

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wishing to imitate them. Carrière is an isolated and inimitable painter, and this has been clearly shown by the work of some painters who wanted to copy him and produced nothing but formless works, instead of seeking inspiration from the same ideas, and trying as sincerely as he does himself to divine what is passing behind a human mask. *Alphonse Daudet and his Daughter*, *Jean Dolent and his Daughter*, *Gabriel Séailles and his Daughter*, *Verlaine, the Sculptor Devillez*, *Edmond de Goncourt*, the painter's *Family*, some portraits of ladies, and *Ernest Chausson and his Family*, are works which count among the most perfect of the nineteenth century, and which could not be painted anew by anybody else. They move in a peculiar atmosphere which has been discovered by Eugène Carrière. Not that he does not recollect Velasquez, Prudhon and Ricard, but he has the gift of penetrating to the very bottom of a soul, and has formed an original conception of the human being. Carrière has nothing of the virtuoso about him, in spite of his skill and harmony; he works slowly, like Ricard, obeying his intuitions as poet and philosopher, and subordinating to them the more especially pictorial charm. The more he has worked, the more he has abandoned colour in order to occupy himself only with shadows, lights, and values, until he has become contented with bistre, white and black, to realize his suggestive paintings, for which our time can produce no analogy, unless it be, in some respects, the work of Mr. Whistler. But the great American master is preoccupied with elegant and decorative line which he does not shrink from emphasizing almost to the point of dryness, where he considers it necessary. This is not Carrière's aim. Except in a few cases he has preferred to paint humble folk, and the sad charm which is found in his work is spontaneously born of the very attitudes of these beings. He does not give style to them with that intention of luxury and choiceness which may be observed in Whistler; he extracts from life, from a face without beauty, the physiological beauty which is the result of individual character, and his faculty of perceiving this character verges on genius. Through this he is great, through this he conquers and stimulates thought.

Albert Besnard's portraits constitute a very important part of his work. Besnard is the most striking type of artist in France. Having



Eugène Carrière.

THE ARTISTS FAMILY.

THE PORTRAIT PAINTERS SINCE INGRES

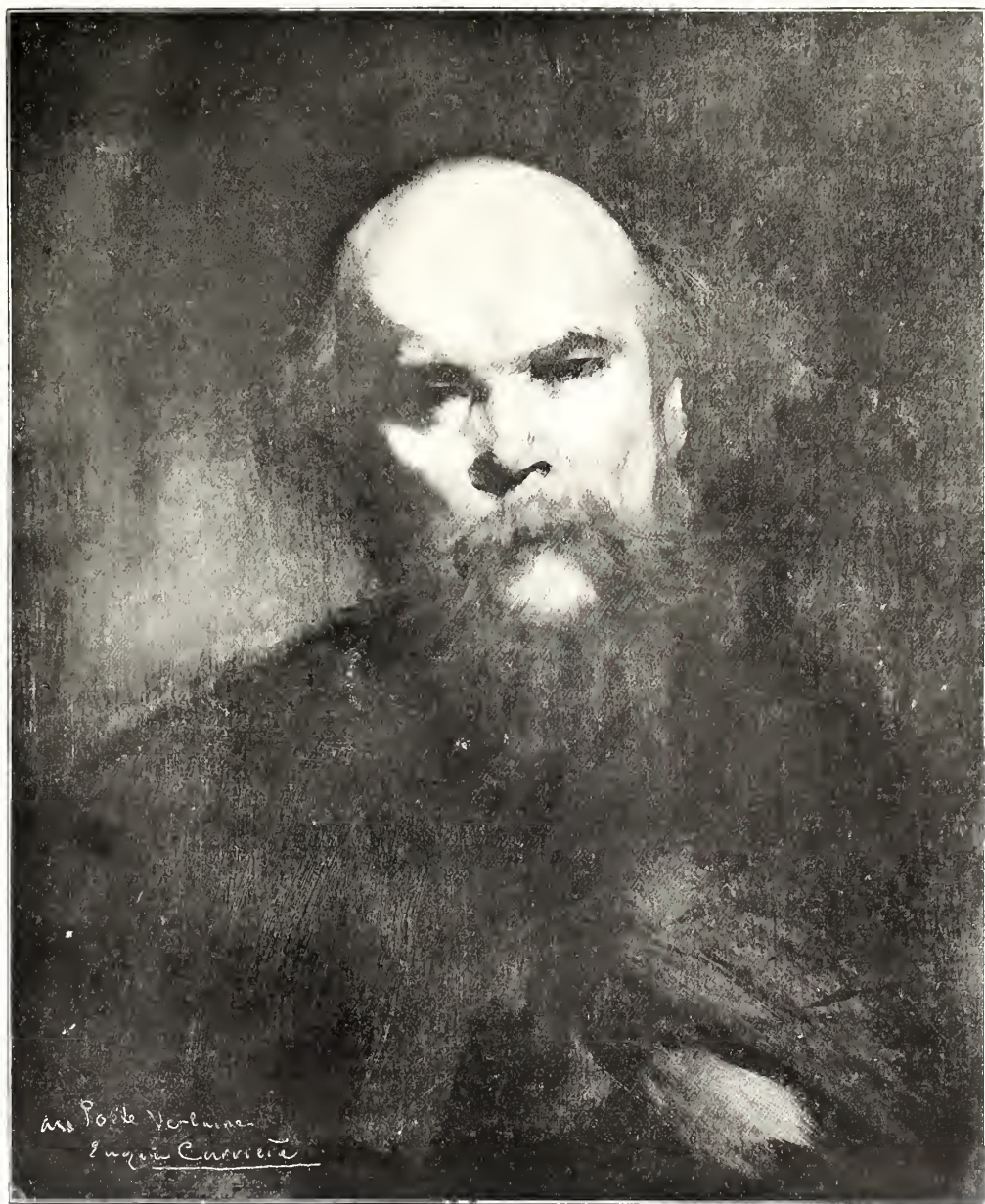
been awarded the Prix de Rome in 1874 he furnishes, with the musicians Claude Debussy and Gustave Charpentier, an example of the invincible reaction of really original temperaments against sterile teaching. After 1880 Besnard was clearly free of the School's influence, and revealed himself as a great virtuoso of his art, endowed with an intellectuality which is only too rare with painters. He began by making a speciality of the study of reflections, and in this he achieved results which had escaped the efforts of the impressionists. He has been classed among them, a classification which is right and wrong at the same time. Besnard's characteristic is, that he has fully understood the innovations introduced by impressionism, but that he has from the very outset gone beyond the superficial realism to which this admirable movement was confined. Besnard is the artist who will appear in the future as the logical transition between impressionism and the twentieth century. There is in him a mixture of tendencies which he has succeeded in combining logically. He is a poet, fond of anything strange, and has proved this by his drawings for occultist works, his etchings, and his decorations. He is sensual and enamoured of exuberant vitality. He thinks, has ideas at the same time evolutionary and deistic, and thus has been set on the scent of the modern style manifested in his paintings at the Sorbonne, the *Ecole de Pharmacie*, and the Berck church. He succeeds in reconciling all this, thanks to an invincible common-sense, an inborn classicism, a passionate love of French lucidity, which has permitted him to try himself in every *genre*, without ever being obscure, pompous, or disorderly. This dreamer haunted by Poe, this spirit fond of knowledge, this virtuoso who adores flesh, flowers, horses and mountains, this subtle pastellist, this aquarellist of unexpected whims, is also a classicist in spite of appearances, a classicist enamoured of Ingres, who is his god, and of the eighteenth-century portrait painters, some of whose marvels he jealously guards in his house. If the iridescent fairyland of his colour makes him impressionist, Besnard as draughtsman is a classicist as prudent as he is daring, who only yields to the pleasure of revelling in bold tones, after having clearly defined through his drawing the character of his models. It certainly has happened to him sometimes to succumb to the voluptuousness of painting with a frenzy that reminds one of Rubens, whom he admires as much as Ingres. He has lost in

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depth; his exceptional facility has sometimes robbed him of the high degree of psychological intuition which, in a Ricard or a Carrière, accompanies the particular difficulty of producing. But his great works are exempted from this haste and will answer for him in the future.

His portrait of *Madame Roger Jourdain*, at the Salon of 1884, caused a veritable revolution. It will always be the very seal of his talent: he has painted stronger and more complete things, but never has he better summed up the twofold tendency of his mind. It is an ultra-impressionist work, this study of a woman lighted on one side by the orange lights of a lamp, and on the other by the bluish lights of twilight, let in through the glass panes of a conservatory. And at the same time the attitude, the decorative movement of the ball-dress, as it undulates with the spiritual vivacity of her gait, make this picture an eighteenth-century portrait. What is entirely the artist's own, over and above these two tendencies, is the quiet strangeness of the face, the fantastic appearance of this head bathed in two dissimilar lights. This portrait really marks the hour when the theories of impressionism permeated the art of painting to be transformed in it. It is a step forward, taken after Manet and Renoir, and also a striking return to the traditions of lightness of eighteenth-century portraiture. It has a grace and a French elegance which impressionism, a little weighted by realist ideas, had never known.

Besnard's other portraits, not to speak of that indisputable masterpiece, the *Nude Woman warming Herself*, of the Luxembourg Gallery, have placed him in the rank of the great feminist painters of the French school, from the portraits of *Madame Madeleine Lemaire*, of *Mdles. D.*, and of *Madame Besnard*, to that beautiful *Féerie intime* of 1901, and that astonishing portrait of *Madame Rêjane* which has excited universal admiration. The brilliancy, the luxury and the voluptuousness of these works never interfere with the quietness of style, the free grace of the gestures, and the distinction of the *ensemble*. Never does the virtuosity of the colourist go so far astray as to neglect his models' true quality as women of the world. These portraits are bouquets; their sight is a feast for one's eyes; and Besnard knows how to deck woman in the richest tones, with a grand decorative feeling which makes of her a being of joy and of happy dreams. But she always remains individual, studied with that



E. Carrière.

PORTRAIT OF PAUL VERLAINE.



Jacques Blanche.

PORTRAIT.

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serious care, of which the few portraits of male sitters painted by this artist give indisputable proof.

Nearly all the artists of the present day paint portraits, but this, it may well be considered, is more a case of pecuniary necessity, than an actual vocation. Yet it is a vocation quite distinct from the other pictorial *genres*. "Nothing is more difficult, than to paint a full-length portrait, in which the feet and the head are on the same vertical plane," said a great painter, and independently of this problem of the correctness of values thus pleasantly summed up, portraiture demands a rare faculty of psychology. The portrait can only be admirable or indifferent. The younger generation in France has produced some fine portrait painters. Most French amongst them is M. Jacques Emile Blanche, who was influenced by Whistler and the English school to develop late a fine personalty. M. Louis Anquetin has signed some strong portraits which recall Manet's best qualities. M. Aman Jean and M. Ernest Laurent are as charming and deep in their portraits as they are found to be in their compositions. M. Helleu has gained for himself the most enviable position among the feminists of his time, thanks to his exquisite dry-points through which passes the recollection of Watteau; and, finally, M. Antonio de la Gandara, influenced at the same time by Velasquez and by Whistler, and happily blending these two influences to the point of clearly showing the kinship of these two masters, has rightly become the painter of the ultra-refined and elegant woman of Paris society. His portraits are noble and nervous; their superb technique is at the same time energetic and supple, and they have a significance which makes them valuable documents on the style and taste of contemporary woman.

Such has been the evolution of the portrait. Having been formerly sacrificed to the accessories, so that the subject was defined by its costumes and by the signs of its social rank, it has now become mysterious and expressive of the soul, sometimes reduced to a general harmony, sometimes strongly individual. It seems that the influence of Prudhon, Ricard, Whistler and Carrière has prevailed to make the painter consider above all the amount of mystery contained in every human being. Besnard stands alone, so to speak, in connecting modern portraiture with the tradition of the eighteenth century. But both these

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tendencies strive to escape the first degree of resemblance, and to reach beyond the simply physiological reality to what psychologists call "the second reality." The century of criticism was bound to arrive at this transposition: here, as elsewhere, it was no longer satisfied with mere appearance.



Renoir.

MME. REJANE.

CHAPTER V

THE ORIENTALISTS

Delacroix, his influence and example.—Orientalism a fashion of romanticism.—The study of the picturesque in Syria and later in Algeria.—Marilhat, Berchère.—The work of Chassériau.—Regnault, Constant, Ziem.—Guillaumet, Besnard, Dinet, and some modern painters.

AS far back as the seventeenth century the Orient already preoccupied the painters and writers. But the almost total ignorance of the scenery and costumes only allowed the most arbitrary fancies. Just as Molière introduced Turks into his plays (the Turks alone representing the Orient in the eyes of the people of the seventeenth century), so the painters made them figure in their pictures. Everybody knows this strange composite type which can be found even in Rembrandt, this Moor with the huge turban and aigrette, with the curved sword and innumerable precious stones. Mingled with it are recollections of the Bible, and many hints due to the Venetians, to pirates and Algerian captives; and the result is a barbaric and amusing type. The eighteenth century, which had become far more familiar with the “Infidels,” and knew far better the real nature of Syria, Araby and India, is taken up with the voluptuous wisdom, the luxury, the subtlety and the glory of Damascus, Smyrna, Chiraz, Bagdad, and the Arabic and Persian Khalifats. The oriental story flourished under its transparent disguise, the writer set out his reflections on morals, full of anti-social and anti-hierarchic irony. There is no end of imaginary voyages, of Persian narratives, adventures of Kalenders and Sultans,—a perfect craze for oriental humour, sensuality, and even ferocity, and for the practical wisdom of dervishes and cadis. There is no writer of stories but believes himself obliged to introduce an Oriental into his tales. Indians were only to come into fashion much later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But the apogee of the oriental story in literature was reached in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was a fashion that degenerated into a perfect rage, and the imitations of “The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments” are innumerable.

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The craze did not stop at the opera ballet, which must needs have its Moorish *divertissement*. It is easy to imagine how the painters and draughtsmen followed this impulsion, and all, more or less, amused themselves with "doing something Turkish." However, we have to reach the threshold of the nineteenth century to find in art a serious and truthful revelation of the Orient. The expedition to Egypt supplied an



MANET
REST

opportunity for it, and already in Gros's pictures might be found precise and even scrupulously realistic observation. From that moment artists were caught by a fever of curiosity as regards the Orient. Their attention was called off by the continental wars and by the Restoration; but two events restored to it all its strength and were to create artistic orientalism: the battle of Navarino and the capture of Algiers.

The horrors of the Turko-Greek war inspired Delacroix for his *Massacre of Scio* and Hugo for his *Orientales*. Delacroix's work, like a sublime call,

awakened a world of ideas and desires. The whole of romanticism was roused to enthusiasm for the Orient, and wished to become acquainted with it. Chateaubriand, with his "Guide from Paris to Jerusalem," and Lamartine, with his "Oriental Travels," contributed greatly to the new movement. Before long Gautier was to write his brilliant book on Constantinople, and in this marvellous town Delacroix was to find the subject for a splendid picture and for one of the strongest landscapes of the French school. The fashion of Turkish panoplies, costumes and



E. Delacroix.

THE MASSACRE OF SCIO.

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nargilehs, was imported by the old soldiers from Egypt and by the victors of Navarino: everything was *à la turque*. Contemporaneously with Delacroix, who produced two more masterpieces of this style—the *Jewish Wedding* and the *Algiers Women*—Decamps revealed his genius. Even Ingres himself swam with the tide and painted his *Odalisque*. The era of orientalist painters was about to commence.

The primary attraction is not the psychology of an unknown race, but the brilliancy of colour, the abundant variety of picturesque resources, the seductive profusion of embroideries, carpets, armour and jewels, the beauty of the horses and saddles, all the accessories which were now to fill the studios of the romanticists. The beginning was made with interiors filled with shadow in which rich reflections could be distinguished. Then there awoke the interest in Algerian or Syrian landscape with its pink and blue horizons, its sand, its oases, its slender palms, its astounding and exhausting light that makes all the colours of the palette appear sooty. And in proportion, as the painters learned the road through this country newly opened to their inspiration, oriental nature appeared in their works.

Marilhat was one of the first to understand it well, in those canvases of his in which a golden brightness is concentrated, in which everything seems permeated by the essence of the sun, in spite of the hardness of the silhouettes and the excessive blackness of the shadows, due to the artist's fear of an enormous light and of the difficulty of preserving in it correct values. Marilhat is more a painter of Algerian skies than a painter of landscapes; but his work remains very strong and interesting. Next to him Berchère, with less power and depth, shows himself more inclined to observe life, to place characteristic beings into the azure and the white dust. He notes the halts of camel-drivers by the fountain, scenes in front of tents, silhouettes of women, and the disorder of mining encampments, with somewhat gray colouring, but with much sincerity. Without intending to do so, Berchère contributed towards the wrong interpretation of orientalism which prevailed between 1840 and 1850. Blending sentimentalism and "academism" with this new subject, the "taste for romance" invented an Orient as false as the *turqueries* of yore. There are quantities of pictures to be seen, coloured in blue and insipid pink, of conventional mosques,

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pompous and ridiculous Arab love-scenes, Ouled-Naïls of academic cut, models draped in tinsel or lying on tiger skins, a whole masquerade of bad taste, in which there is nothing real, nothing observed.

But fortunately Delacroix continued to create. His *Fights* between Syrian horsemen are marvels of tragic truth, of fury, of light and of wild and ardent vitality. And then there appeared at his side a young man whose Creole blood burned with sympathy for this new world. After having been Ingres's beloved disciple, Théodore Chassériau joined Delacroix. By then he had visited the Orient and settled in Algiers. With his voluptuous temperament, which was already in his first classicist pictures haunted by the languor of the *Song of Solomon* and the recollection of the amorous women of Greece, he at once understood this country. Chassériau was the first to paint the domestic life of the Arabs, their horse-markets and camps, interiors of mud huts with women spinning wool, watering places and gloomy plains. He understood the natural statuesqueness of these men, who live in draperies which they never quit. He understood their simple and crafty souls, their cruelty, their pride, their childish joys and their obstinacy. He waxed enthusiastic over the beauty of the horsemen and horses, the severity of the faces, the tawny colour of the soil, over everything that fascinates almost to dizziness in this enervating country. Some of his fighting scenes, furious medleys of mares and men, heaps of gilt tatters from which break the flashes of the guns or the cold bluish sparkle of the blades, are equal to those of Delacroix. But the most original of all his paintings are the aspects of monotonous and peaceful life. Returning from Touggourt or from Timgad one can see again without fantasy his spinning-women, his Kif smokers, his camel drivers. He knows how to group with masterly sureness animals and men, and place behind them the grand golden and bluish perspectives of a vast Southern landscape. Chassériau's orientalist works, documentary and poetical as they are, remain among the finest and most significant that have ever been painted, and contain the germ of all that came after him. Even the audacities of colouring which Besnard was to permit himself fifty years later under the skies of Algeria, can be found in Chassériau.

Chassériau remains, all the same, heroical and lyrical. It was re-



Théodore Chassériau.

ARAB CHIEFS FIGHTING.

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served for Fromentin to study Arab life even more scrupulously and without regard for fine attitudes. Eugène Fromentin, who wrote a powerful novel of real beauty, "Dominique," and a book on Algeria, "A Summer in the Sahel," which contains much striking observation, had distinction of mind and delicacy of soul. The painter was unfortunately badly served by his timid technique; yet he is not without charm. He understood above all the Algerian melancholy, the sad tedium, the passiveness and the unconscious sadness of that life. How far removed already from Delacroix's dazzling dream! It is no longer the mere question of rich and picturesque Syria, but of Algeria as it is. Modern psychological taste has touched upon fairyland and unveiled the misery hidden within it, and Fromentin's somewhat tarnished spirit sees this misery, before noticing the splendour of sky and sun.

Meanwhile the School too was occupied with orientalism. Gustave Boulanger and Gérôme approached it with the same correctness and the same taste as their mythological works; but, preoccupied above all with picturesque detail, they do not seem to have penetrated into the very psychology of the race they study. The only two orientalist painters whom the School will be able to claim with pride will be Henri Regnault and Benjamin Constant. Even then Regnault was rather on the fringe of the School, and drew more and more away from it. He was a lyricist, a romanticist, who had not perhaps the time to accomplish the same evolution as Chassériau. He has left some strong pieces, and one picture which is even beautiful: the equestrian portrait of General Prim. His oriental water-colours are bathed in hot light, and make one forgive him the theatrical and unpleasant *Decapitation* which compromises his other works at the Louvre. Regnault brought back with him from Morocco numerous studies of architecture and of expressive heads, which testify to a brilliant nature that would certainly have become masterly had it not been for the artist's premature death in 1870. The beautiful colour and passionate execution of Regnault's *Salome* and *Judith* recall the work of Delacroix.

Morocco, again, is the country which Benjamin Constant visited several times for the purpose of painting. This artist was never in any way great, nor even original; but it cannot be denied that he was a clever and conscientious painter, anxious to make progress, and that

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he carried a very liberal spirit into the Institute. Benjamin Constant was one of those painters who lead the life of violinists or tenors, travelling all over the world, and gaining enormous sums by painting portraits in a few sittings. He had, thanks to this easy life, ideas and points of view less narrow than those of the Academicians, and he rather tried to get rid of the routine of his education. But he could not find within himself sufficient power and invention to become, say, a John Sargent, as he would have liked to be; he hesitated, and was neither official nor independent. Some of his portraits of handsome men and his Moorish canvases will be more valued than any of his other work. Constant's Orient is superficially observed by a man who is imbued with studio receipts, and to whom it had never occurred for a moment to penetrate into the thought of the Moors, to express their fatalism and the dissimilarity between the Arab soul and ours. Constant was neither capable of serious observation nor of historical reflection. But his canvases are voluptuous and express fairly well the sensuality of the Orient. The *Chérifas*, lying naked in the shadow, with the fugitive sparkling of their jewels, the supple animality of their tawny limbs, the vague and rich mass of gold cloth and carpets, make an interesting canvas; and the same remark applies to certain studies and to the *Prisoners of the Sultan of Tangiers*. This vision of Benjamin Constant's is theatrical, artificial and purely external, but it is nevertheless full of colour and life and imbued with free, open air. In some respects it is superior to Fromentin's, though it is far from rivalling its subtlety of observation and distinction of style. It has more freedom and is already nearer to impressionism and not without charm.

The painter of Venetian landscapes, Félix Ziem, who links Turner's manner to Claude Monet's with great qualities of colouring, produced some beautiful sketches of Constantinople, which justify his being attached to the series of Orientalists, although, with complete disregard for ethnological character, he restricted himself, like Marilhat, to struggling with the dazzling light of the skies. A painter was now about to appear, in close proximity to our contemporaries, who would unite the character searched for by Fromentin and the colouring searched for by Marilhat, without having recourse to Chassériau's romanticism—Gustave Guillaumet. Living the very life of the Arabs, in Algeria,



Georges

COCK-FIGHTING.

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he studied during many long years, permeated himself with the atmosphere and customs of the towns dispersed along the threshold of the Sahara, in the wild gorges of El Kantara, in the burnt plains around Laghouat. His technique is learned, but simple. Sometimes he makes use of the division of tones more discreetly than the impressionists, but very methodically all the same; sometimes he has recourse to a kind of vaporous modelling, as subtle as pastel, and envelops all the outlines in a velvety vibration that expresses admirably the phenomenon of the indecision of silhouettes, which is peculiar to the region of the Sahara, where the corrosive power of the light seems to destroy all outlines.

Guillaumet dared to paint the desert. His *Sunrise*, at the Luxembourg, and his *Evening at Laghouat* at the same gallery are two works of the first order. In the one the infinite plain appears, volatilized by the terrible radiance of the solar atmosphere, which rises in a cloud of hot vapours to quiver in the zenith in long, multicoloured vibrations. In the foreground lies the skeleton of a dromedary. The silence is majestic and terrible, the life is so tremendous, that it is almost tantamount to extinction, so strongly does one feel the impossibility of breathing in this conflagration. From those who return from across the Atlas, still retaining on their retina the vision of the Arab villages, the *Laghouat* will always extract an exclamation of admiration. It represents a square in the evening, when the sun is about to disappear. The ground and the mud-huts have swelled through the heat and have at once the colour of mud and of worn gold. In the background a purplish minaret rises in a fine line against a sky that is dusty, blue, and green, but chiefly pale and colourless, owing to the burning heat since the hour of dawn. The inhabitants, squatted all day long on the floor of their miserable huts, drag themselves outside to breathe and to say their evening prayers. They, too, have the colour of earth. In their soiled burnouses they seem to be modelled in red clay or grayish potter's earth, just as though the stones of the walls or the sand of the ground had taken human, moving forms. Some children playing in the middle of the street can hardly be distinguished from the soil. Everywhere vibrates a kind of dust of rosy light, luminous and dull at the same time, without one brilliant or vivid note. The work is one of striking truth. The more you study it, the more you discover what a

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store of knowledge, observation, and deep feeling for a country and race it contains, and in the end you are bound to arrive at the conclusion that you are in the presence of a real masterpiece. Another small work of Guillaumet's, a marvel of simple and exact feeling, delicate in colour and extremely true in drawing and expression, is his *Spinners of Bou-Saada*. Guillaumet must be considered as one of the best orientalist of the nineteenth century, and one endowed with the most subtle vision and the most supple technique, within the apparent modesty of his means, of the painters of this epoch.

It is very strange that the impressionists should not have gone to Algeria in search of motives for their variegated and brilliant art, and this can only be explained by their affection for "modernist" subjects and French landscape. We may well imagine that Claude Monet could have done wonders there, judging by his views of the *Golfe Juan* and his Antibes gardens, in which he has painted exotic trees in so admirable a fashion. Renoir was the only one who crossed the sea, and the studies he brought back are no more among his best works, than those he made in Venice. The Orient, Algeria and Morocco had no existence in the eyes of the impressionists. But the group of orientalists of the present day has quite recently gained an illustrious recruit: Albert Besnard spent a year in Algeria, where he painted some of his best canvases. One of these has become famous: the *Port of Algiers at Twilight*, at the Luxembourg Gallery. The artist has delighted here in giving play to all the reflections of his radiant palette, setting a sky on fire with tints of orange, green and rose, and lighting up with the sparkling of precious stones, the sapphire and emerald water through which ships are dragging heavily. But what has interested Besnard above all is the life and the colour of the people. He saw the Arab like a statue in movement, dressed in beautiful folds which wed the form of the body, moving about with indolent dignity, thinking not at all and giving much food for thought. He became enamoured of horses, of which he had already realized in France the most perfect studies that contemporary art has made in this difficult *genre*, and he signed the most perfect "portraits of Arab horses" that can be seen since those painted by Géricault and Delacroix. This singular expression may well be applied to these pictures, so thoroughly has the artist succeeded in

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defining the breed of these horses and the slightest points of the different equine species of the Tell and the desert. The result of his investigations is summed up in the *Horse Fair at Algiers*, a veritable symphony of angry light, through which pass burnouses of blinding whiteness, where white horses appear pink and mauve, and where those who wear dark robes take shades of purple and sulphur. Besnard has observed successfully also the strange violent beauty of the Ouled-Nails, with their khol-painted eyes, their full, rouged lips, their cat-like pupils, their supple and slender arms like feline paws; and he has rendered them in a series of surpassingly rich and original pastels. Besnard's Algerian work is the recreation of a great painter who loves the sun, a savoury episode in his vast production. It sometimes conjures up Chassériau, but it has no trace of romanticism left. It is realistic, voluptuous, and vibrating, while still remaining exact.

Wherever a master like Besnard appears, every other painter is put more or less into the shade. Nevertheless, the orientalism of to-day counts some artists of real merit. During an all too short journey, M. Dagnan-Bouveret painted, some time ago, some delicate studies, one of which—the small *Cemetery at Blidah*—is altogether exquisite and makes one regret that he should have abandoned this road. There are hardly any good painters of Algeria in the country itself, and the works sent across the Mediterranean are very indifferent. But quite recently a painter of



MANET
THE WOMAN WITH THE PARROT

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great merit has revealed himself in Paris, an inhabitant of the desert, and one who has the power of giving unusually fine expression to its colouring and its mirages. Maxime Noiré is an admirable colourist, and an exhibition of his work created a profound sensation. He devotes himself above all to the rendering of dreary sites, rocky gorges, and dead cities. He expresses their rude grandeur, the touching sadness and the implacable radiation of heat and light, with more gradations than Fromentin; and in a more purely impressionist manner than Guillaumet. With Noiré, orientalism discards entirely all care for romanticist composition. The painters of 1840 approached it with preconceived ideas, literary dreams, and recollections of antiquity which could be far better applied to Asia Minor than to Algeria. The modern painters, like Noiré or Besnard, are much more absorbed by the problem of light, and confine themselves to this study. In the same spirit, but painted with more concern for picturesque customs, are the first works of Armand Point, who has since devoted himself to conventionalized painting and become a kind of French pre-Raphaelite. Born in Algiers, he painted there some very fine canvases, without exaggeration in their brilliancy, some of which are at the same time truthful and charming. The robust painter, Charles Cottet, before becoming the bard of rugged Brittany, also made a journey across the Mediterranean, and saw Algiers with an original energy, painting the red rocks, the purple shadows, and the black costumes of the nomads. Finally, Algeria has found one of her most remarkable painters and one of her most scrupulous and fervent historiographers in Etienne Dinet, who has gained a well-deserved reputation. He is an excellent painter, and a very serious, if not a very individual draughtsman. He lives among the Arabs and has composed a considerable series of works on their method of life. He excels in expressing the light of summer days and the bewitching blueness of moonlit nights. He is thoroughly well acquainted with the faces, the typical gestures, the expressions, costumes and accessories of the Algerians. He succeeds in remaining true to life in studying the primitive and fierce beauty of their courtesans, the sly subtlety of the looks of the children and their animal grace. Certain scenes of prayer and of funerals have been rendered by him in a most impressive manner. He has put violence and lyricism into a very well-known illustration of the story of "Antar,"

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and much grace into some water colours illustrating Arab love-stories. One can only regret his somewhat dry execution, the elaboration of detail, and the attention to *finish*, which sometimes reduce his paintings to the *genre* of illustrations, to the detriment of the fine pictorial qualities. But this does not impair the significance and the great interest of his work. It is certainly the best instance of present-day orientalism.

Indirectly M. Rochegrosse may be connected with orientalism. Although he is only concerned with it from the point of view of history, he has placed many of his compositions into real Algerian landscapes. His beautiful and learned illustration to "Salammbô," among others, has been faithfully reconstructed on the very spots where the war of the Mercenaries took place, and the artist has brought back from his annual visits to Algiers a number of vibrating studies which might take a place among the best of this epoch. James Tissot's "Life of Christ" was also executed in the atmosphere of Syria. Finally, there is hardly a name to be mentioned among the painters who devote themselves to exoticism. The impressionist Paul Gauguin has within the last few years been to Tahiti, whence he has brought back a series of decorative works, in which the intentional brutality, the excessive primitiveness, of the drawing, cannot prevent one from recognizing fine pictorial qualities. The sketches and water-colour drawings of artists travelling in the extreme East have not exceeded the interest of albums, and it seems that Syria and Egypt are being neglected, though the modern vision would find most fascinating subjects for studies in these countries. Encouragement by the Colonial Minister has, moreover, only been held out to painters without any great merit. Algeria concentrates in this respect all the attention of the artists of to-day.

Thus it seems that orientalism, after having shone with great brilliancy, has for the moment been abandoned. The preoccupation of the modern artist is entirely with impressionism or intimism. An exhibition of Orientalists has been founded in Paris with the object of reviving the interest in this branch of painting, but it serves mainly for showing the old works by Marilhat, Chassériau, and Guillaumet. The great wave of curiosity caused by the expedition to Egypt, by Navarino and the conquest of Algeria has subsided. Pierre Loti's oriental novels do not carry away the minds and fancies, like the travels of Chateau-

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briand, Lamartine, and Gautier. Artists' studios were formerly filled with rugs, arms, Jewish lamps and masses of Turkish knick-knacks. To-day they are light, and contain lacquered furniture, Liberty stuffs, pottery, and glasses. Japonism has deposed orientalism and turned men's minds toward a wider exoticism. The artist of to-day, when shutting the modern vision from his eyes, in order to dream of "going to distant lands," thinks of Tahiti, Ceylon, Indo-China, or Nippon. With the increased rapidity of transport, the Orient of yore—Asia Minor and Egypt—which seemed to be fabulously distant, does not now seem far enough. And we shall probably soon see pictorial works telling us all about the most distant countries, just as they formerly told us about Syria, and recently about Algeria.

It is none the less true that orientalism has been an exquisite flower in the gloomy, tormented art of the nineteenth century. It has counted in its ranks a sufficiently great number of fine interpreters to deserve a special chapter in the history of painting. It has served, not only to cause the production of a few more marvels, but to counterbalance the influence of academism, to brighten the palette, to carry the imagination and dreams of artists far away from tedious and tame classicism. It has done good service to many second-rate colourists, who have painted estimable and attractive pictures under the azure of Algeria, whilst, had they remained in Paris, they would have succumbed to the errors of machine-made art. Finally, orientalism has enabled painters to describe an interesting race and new horizons, and has given them an opportunity of practising the study of light. These are no slight merits, and exoticism will add others to them. But those I have mentioned will suffice to compel a general history of painting to take into account this charming lyrical interlude, which has become a supplement to psychologic realism, from Delacroix to Chassériau and from Guillaumet to Besnard.



G. Guillaumet.

LAGHOUAT, ALGERIAN SAHARA.

CHAPTER VI

THE SYMBOLISTS, IDEALISTS AND HISTORICAL PAINTERS

Why the nineteenth century has produced so little symbolist art.—Chassériau.—Gustave Moreau and his neo-mythological work.—Henner and idealism.—Odilon Redon, Fantin-Latour.—Historical and archaeological painting: J. P. Laurens, Gérôme, James Tissot, Rochegrosse.—Military painting: Vernet, De Neuville, Meissonier, Détaillé.

AFTER Delacroix, after Decamps, the robust realist-romanticist of the *Battle of the Cimbri*, it seemed as if a spacious road had been opened to a pictorial art capable of reanimating the scenes of history. The question of the creation of a modern symbolism was opened in opposition to the mythological symbolism of the School. It is, as a matter of fact, quite natural to think that symbols, being nothing but a kind of international language created to represent easily, through signs, certain grand ideas, can and should be renewed with the evolution of style and of social life. The Greek symbols represent the forces of Nature, and modern exégesis has demonstrated the universality of this process in the mythology of different races. Thus symbolism and allegory can be applied successively to new forms. Electricity and magnetism will supply us with the *motifs* for symbols hitherto unforeseen. Eugène Delacroix's *Barricade*,—which I should have liked to reproduce in this volume, in order to place it under the moral authority of this great forerunner—is an example of a symbolism overflowing with most intense realism, and whatever admiration we may feel for this work, it will never be comparable to that which it must have excited among the young men of 1832, who were still quivering under the breath of that revolution. In the same way, when the *Massacre of Scio* appeared, it gave the impression of a study from the nude as much as of a work of art; it could be considered as a moral element as much as an esthetic masterpiece; it could act upon disturbed and enthusiastic minds as directly as a book. There was some excuse, therefore, for thinking that modern symbolism was about to blossom, to shake off all antique acces-

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sories, and to war against the eternal commonplaces of scholastic allegory which represents Justice by a pair of scales, Poetry by laurel and lyre, the Ideal by wings, and generally all abstract notions by nude or draped figures holding emblems. But nothing came of it. There are two reasons, no doubt, which will supply a perfectly logical explanation: the first is, that these rudimentary symbols have been imposed upon public imagination for centuries with such persistency, that the changes in social life and government cannot affect them, that the Republic, for instance, makes use of the same symbols as the Monarchy, and that in the twentieth century coins are still struck on which can be seen Hercules with his club, or Themis with her scales. This is, after all, of fairly practical use and quickly comprehensible. The second reason we know: the whole nineteenth century was a period of struggle against the School and of the development of realism, which was of the first importance under the given circumstances. Before searching for the symbolism of the epoch, it was necessary to study this epoch and to give to contemporary scenes "the freedom of the city," which they were refused in Nature. We shall see that we had to come down to Besnard to meet with a real attempt at a symbolism drawn from chemistry, electricity and the interpretation of science. But from Delacroix to Besnard symbolism and allegory kept within the ancient boundaries. The School supplied them with nearly all their means of representation. As to historical painting, that also kept within the conventional limitations, and it was not until within the last thirty years that we have seen it become correct and documentary, contemporaneously with the works upon ancient life, which then, under the impulsion of Renan, Louis Ménard and Fustel de Coulager, as under that of Walter Pater and Mommsen, made rapid and mighty progress.

I have, then, for want of better terms, used those of *symbolists* and *idealists* to classify a few artists who do not very well fit into any other category, and who have, up to a point, accomplished in France a task which is analogous to that of the English pre-Raphaelites, or at least of some of them, notably of Rossetti, Watts and Burne-Jones. This movement has been a protest simultaneously against the School and against realism, and for this reason it is interesting to study.

The first great personality to be encountered after Delacroix is that



E. Delacroix.

LIBERTY (1830)

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of Théodore Chassériau, who died at the age of thirty-six, after having accomplished an immense task. A pupil of Ingres's, he left him for the sake of his love for orientalism and his admiration for the passionate genius of Delacroix. Chassériau is, perhaps, the artist who occupies the most significant position in the history of eighteenth-century painting. He is at the same time classicist and romanticist. Some of his pictures are in Ingres's manner, others have the fire of Delacroix, notably his *Vercingetorix* and his Arab fighting scenes, some of which are masterpieces of truth to Nature and strength. He has signed some very strong portraits. Finally, his decorations for the *Cour des Comptes* in Paris, burnt during the Commune and recently demolished, foretold Puvis de Chavannes in a striking manner. They are now a mere recollection, of which nothing remains but some photographs taken at the instance of Chassériau's family and of Ernest Renan. They were noble allegories with a colouring and a decorative rhythm which recalled the Venetians. In some of his easel pictures Chassériau shows a technique which already foretold Gustave Moreau's by its heaping of precious stones, its sumptuous, pasty layers of paint, and its correct subordination of interest. He may be said to stand at the point where Delacroix, Ingres, Gustave Moreau and Puvis de Chavannes intersect, issuing from some of them and foretelling the others, while still retaining his splendid individuality and an extraordinary fertility which, had his career but been longer, would perhaps have made him one of the greatest French creators.

We must now refer to the work of Gustave Moreau (for Puvis de Chavannes will be found again among the decorators, among whom he is the greatest) and try clearly to determine the place of this enigmatical artist, who is but little known, in spite of his fame. Moreau lived in obscurity. He made a successful *début* at the Salons, and then retired to lead a solitary life, selling his works direct to collectors who jealously concealed them. Nothing was known of him but his name which was cried up by critics like M. Huysmans, and some rare photographs of five or six pictures. Towards the end of his life Moreau was elected a member of the Institute (though he was little liked by his colleagues) more as a protest against the new painting. He remained on the whole an aged representative of allegorical art, and was counted on to oppose impressionism. But when nominated Professor at the *École des Beaux-Arts*,

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Moreau evinced, on the contrary, the most generous spirit, encouraging young people to follow their instinct, and making them honour the primitives, to the great scandal of the School, although he affected to hold them in poor esteem. At his death he bequeathed to the State his house full of pictures, and recently this museum has, after many vicissitudes, been opened to the public, who have at last been enabled to judge the enormous work of an artist, of whom they only knew the name and some fifteen water colours left to the Luxembourg by a collector after Moreau's death.

In part of his work Moreau appears as a substitute for Delacroix. Like him he has a taste for the tragic and for decorative heroism, certain analogies of colour and of design. The *Ceiling of the Apollo Gallery* at the Louvre and *Dante's Barge* are the obvious antecedents of many of Moreau's pictures; in particular the corpses heaped around the *Hydra of Lerna*, one of his most beautiful compositions, are absolutely borrowed from Delacroix. And this relationship is also evident in the numerous landscape sketches left by Moreau. They show the same sulphurous and purple skies, the same wild, rocky cliffs, the same phosphorescent thunderstorms, and the same glaucous and sinister waters, painted in a tone which is at once fiery and dull. But Moreau was also in some respects strongly attached to the spirit of the School, and his women often have the form of Ingres's, their swollen turtledove necks, their tender softness. Surpassingly intelligent, familiar with ancient literature, Indian and Asiatic mythology, Moreau's was a spirit naturally leaning to symbolism and extremely fond of literature and exegesis. He saw in the tradition of the School a grandeur which the School saw no longer, and devoted himself to giving a deeper and more romantic interpretation to the classic myths. He was capable of divining a more modern significance beneath the old allegories, and his solitary and comfortable existence allowed him to create exceptional works at his pleasure. He had, too, the greatest love for the primitives, especially those of the Lombard School, by whom he was strongly influenced; and he blended all these admirations, more by will than instinct, more by intellectuality than temperament. In his nudes may be found the feet of Perugino, with long tapering toes, the proportions of Ingres, the serene expression of the Greek goddesses, blended with the delicacy and taste of one who



Gustave Moreau.

MAIDEN WITH THE HEAD AND LYRE OF ORPHEUS.

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was thoroughly acquainted with the universal history of the arts, and chose from it the right elements for expressing his conceptions.

It was perhaps just this excess of knowledge, this superior eclecticism, this cult of the masters, which were responsible for all Moreau's faults: for him art was a matter of will, of learned re-composition, and more and more he lived at the galleries and forgot life. His work was most frequently cold owing to this tension of his mind. It was more that of a writer, a scholar, a philosophic poet and an archaeologist, than that of a painter. He had the most beautiful dreams, but realized them only relatively. His patient, attentive, scrupulous spirit kept him faithful to the School. Although he knew its faults, it still represented to him the cult of grand mythology and of the beauty of proportion. He was liberal enough to admire and to understand Courbet, Degas and Manet, but he remained permeated with the necessity of classicism, though he widened its scope. Thus there may be found in him the gestures of the romanticists, allied with the design of the Academy, which often renders the impression insipid. As time went on, Moreau's spirit matured more and more, until it preferred the symbolism and the scenes of India to anything else. He became hieratical, almost Byzantine, mysterious and rare. He then seemed to strive after a technique analogous to Turner's, and to recall the grand, heroic genius who painted the *Ulysses and Polyphemus* and the *Funeral of Germanicus*; but, unlike Turner, he dared not abandon himself entirely to the strange flight of his dreams. Upon academical bodies he heaped Persian stuffs, and ornaments of gold and jewels, and



RENOIR

PORTRAIT OF MADAME MAITRE

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all his imagination spent itself upon dresses and architecture, without daring to step beyond the limits imposed by the School in the drawing of the figures. In studying the whole of his work we become aware of that singular impression of timidity juxtaposed to boldness, and cannot but deplore the scruples which created such a gulf between Moreau's imagination and his education. Thinking to find support on the solid ground of academical ideas, and perhaps mistrusting his dreams, he thwarted during his whole life the admirable flight of his thought, something like Flaubert tortured by grammatical purism.

Whenever Moreau was able to liberate himself from the strict rule and to rise above it, he has found attitudes and situations of most surprising beauty. The *Hydra of Lerna*, the *Phacton*, the sketch of *The Triumph of Alexander*, the *Indian Poet* and the *Jupiter and Semele* will always rank among the most eloquent, heroic inspirations of all times. His unfinished picture, *Ulysses and the Suitsors*, shows clearly the struggle between his conflicting tendencies: with a middle distance worthy of Delacroix in its passion, science and beautiful colour, we find a tiresomely academical foreground with conventional and false figures, like to Flandrin's and Couture's. His *Orestes* is a commonplace nude in an admirable setting of a palace, where Furies appear, with the strange beauty of Mantegna. His *Jason and Medea*, which is quite in Ingres's style, attains to beauty through sheer serenity of line. His *Europa* and his *Birth of Venus* are figures borrowed from the Venetians in unreal landscapes. His *Salomes* are like Persian miniatures, except the *Salome visiting St. John in Prison*, which comes very near Delacroix's conceptions. Thus throughout Moreau's work we find a *résumé* of all he admires. His colouring is very peculiar. In his oil paintings the artist delights in certain emerald greens and in the low tones of the Lombard school. In his water colours the minuteness and the tarnished look of the work are often deceptive: he works like a jeweller, adding precious stone to precious stone. His nudes have no life: the flesh is ivory, the eyes are jewels, and the landscapes are frozen, made up of minerals, to such a degree that they give the impression of decadent and artificial works. This was evidently the tendency of this hermetic spirit, who loved everything that is rare, mistrusted himself, and restricted himself to drawing "prudently." His architecture is composite, Greek, Hindoo and Persian at the same



Gustave Moreau.

SALOME.

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time, like that of his *Apparition*, or of his *David singing before Saul*, the conception of which is so imposing. It may be said that he ignores Nature and real life: in his pictures may be found landscape sketches painted from Nature, but they are transposed, falsified, and only exist on the plea of being colour notes. His orientalism, in which the recollection of his friend Chassériau sometimes appears, has no reality and dissolves itself into a purely literary vision.

It is easy to understand that his work should have beguiled the modern symbolistic poets, like Flaubert's *Temptation of St. Anthony*. The mystery of Moreau's life, his hieratism, and his subjects, were bound to please those whose imagination was unsatisfied with realism and who were repelled by the School. The revelation of his entire work has cooled this enthusiasm, by showing up the faults, the influences and the timidity of Moreau. It is none the less true that he painted some beautiful and complete works, and that his life, his effort to concentrate the symbolism of all ancient races, his independence of the dogmas of the School, and the lofty flight of his thoughts will secure him esteem and respect and will cause him to be considered one of the most interesting artists of his century. The realists were unjust to him; they were right in blaming him for his design, but they were wrong in condemning his symbolism, which was in no way trite and, at times, even profound. The School could not forgive him his taste for the primitives and for the fantastic. And so he was ever isolated. He has left some disciples who speak with real love of his character. Some have deviated towards the expression of modern life and are excellent painters, like Eugène Martel and Simon Bussy; others have turned to the primitives, to symbolism and occultism, like Georges Rouault and, above all, Georges Desvallières, who is a remarkably gifted painter, and like the Marseilles painter and etcher, Valère Bernard, who also studied under Rops and Puvis de Chavannes. On the other hand it must be admitted that Moreau's work wrongly understood exercised the worst possible influence on a certain number of indifferent painters who had their meeting-place during the last few years at the "Rose-Croix," and who, born for academism, degenerated into oddity by inventing ridiculous symbols. Thus the beautiful and noble pre-Raphaelite movement which has restored in England the cult of the primitives, interpreted the Northern myths, and connected the art of

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painting with that of beautiful lyric poetry, has been parodied and dragged down by a crowd of sentimental allegorists of wearisome preciousness. The only living French pre-Raphaelite who deserves to be mentioned is Armand Point, painter, fresco-painter, goldsmith and enameller, who tries to fall back upon the conception of the artists of the renaissance. The lithographs of M. Odilon Redon, works of excessive strangeness which sometimes verges on obscure beauty, deserve a place by themselves, in the category of fantastic designers, of Martini, Blake and Jérôme Bosch. But the symbolical and mystical tendency, which is still represented by the decorative drawings of the Swiss Carloz Schwabe, is too foreign to the French spirit to allow us to consider these various artists as the genesis of a school: they are rather vestiges of the past.

Another temperament that may also be considered isolated, in spite of its apparent classicism, is that of Jean Jacques Henner, who has spent his life between the School and characterist realism and is to-day at the summit of a long and glorious career, producing admirable portraits. Henner is a sensual colourist, taught by the Venetians. He has neither a theory, nor the pretension of a conception: during the whole of his life he has confined himself to painting the female nude, lovingly, caressing it with his brush. He has all the science of beautiful, classical drawing, but without the dryness, the minuteness and the coldness of the School. He loves nacreous flesh, envelops it in warm and vibrating shadows, blurs the outlines, suppresses the details, and excels in giving the true drawing—the drawing of bodies, of the general effects. He is an emotional and pagan poet. He generally places three-quarters of a figure in shadow, leaving the rest to emerge into light with infinitely delicate shades of half-tones. He presents his nudes against backgrounds of gauze and dull green foliage, with a bit of river or sky in turquoise blue, which recalls Giorgione and also Prudhon. He cares little whether he calls his figures nymphs, Leda, Danaë, Biblis, or any other mythological name that crosses his mind: he is entirely occupied with that same harmony of nacreous flesh and red hair appearing in mysterious shadow. He is a virtuoso. He has no ideas, has painted religious pictures that are in no way religious, and does not compose. He has been blamed for his monotony. But he will outlive a good many of the more versatile painters, on account of his real beauty, the impres-



Gustave Moreau,

JASON AND MEDEA.

SYMBOLISTS, IDEALISTS AND HISTORICAL PAINTERS

sive charm of his colour, the somewhat easy, but very touching reverie of his figures, and, above all, on account of his natural relationship to the Venetians. The evolution of styles and the heated conflict of ideals strike a truce before the simplicity of his work. He carries the same gifts into his portraits; they are poetical, a little vague, and do not evince much study of character; but they are so admirable as regards correctness of values, breadth of light and shade, and distinction of the blacks and the pale flesh tints, that one cannot but love them for their very idealization and for the loftiness of their style.

Almost the same eulogies may be repeated with reference to one of the great living French artists, Henri Fantin-Latour, who does not occupy the position which is his due by rights. He began by painting first-rate portraits, conceived in a serious and pure style of grave truth and concentrated emotion. At the Centenary Exhibition of 1900, by the side of the *Ex-Voto* of Alphonse Legros, who is one of the most penetrating religious painters of our time, some pictures by Fantin-Latour excited much admiration,—a group of portraits which struck one as real masterpieces. A friend of Manet's and of the impressionists, among whom he made his *début*, without sharing their ideas, and an ardent musician, Fantin-Latour painted some canvases, *Homages* to Manet, Delacroix, Berlioz, and Baudelaire, in which he grouped around all these masters their principal friends. Then he dedicated to Wagner a series of lithographs on the principal themes of the Tetralogy. Then he developed a new style, altogether different from the preceding, a veritable music of fine shades: chimerical landscapes with light, floating forms of delicious slenderness, sylphids, nymphs, nudes,—a whole race of allegorical figures. This series of canvases recall Watteau and Monticelli by their technique and graceful sentiment. They suggest a flow of precious stones of rosy, nacreous, blue and golden hues, of exquisite charm and vaporous ideality, the dream of certain eighteenth-century painters taken up again by a modern artist.

Historical and military painting has during the nineteenth century been almost entirely controlled by the Academy. Realism has taken no notice of it, if we except Manet's *Execution of Maximilian at Queretaro* and the *Fight of the Kearsarge with the Alabama*. Historical painting is in itself an aesthetic mistake. It is a false representation, a gratuitous

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

supposition of the way in which a scene might have taken place; and all we retain in our mind of historical dramas is their consequences. A historical picture is necessarily a miscellany, an exhibition of costumes, an archaeological work. The drama which it presents could only really stir us up, if it took place before our eyes; we only retain its eternal elements. The historical picture can therefore only be of interest, if it becomes a document on figures and scenes that we do not know. This conception is of recent birth; the School did not trouble about it: its Greeks and Romans had nothing in common with truth, they were studio models dressed in conventional tinsel. When it became a question of painting contemporary history, the School continued its routine, in spite of the example set by Gros, in spite of Géricault's superb military portraits. It was not convinced by Delacroix's admirable *Meeting of the Convention*, a sublime page, across which passes the mighty breath of history. Delaroche's pictures are devoid even of documentary interest. The series of canvases at the Versailles Gallery, recalling the glorious battles of the Empire, is declamatory. The only picture to be found there, that will be an immortal example, is Delacroix's *Saint Louis at Taillebourg*. All the rest are indifferent, stilted and banal. Horace Vernet, who was overwhelmed with honours and passed for a long time as a great painter, appears to us to-day as a man of commonplace facility, but lacking completely in pictorial merit; witness his panoramic views, in which he paints smiling or lyrical generals brandishing flags or *képis* in stagey attitudes. These pictures contain nothing of truth, nothing of the tragedy of warfare. The same applies to the pictures of Yvon and Robert-Fleury, conscientious and spiritless works of patience. Finally, Meissonier's military canvases are, like his small pictures of the Louis XIII. period, works that stupefy the mind by their incredible and useless minuteness. Painted to be seen through the magnifying glass, these pictures appear clever. I have already explained in what way this skill is anti-pictorial and does not deserve the name of cleverness. The designs only reach the ideal of photography, and the colour is without harmony, without life and passion. The uniforms move about in badly constructed landscapes, which have neither light nor atmosphere, and never suggest the boom of war. It is known that Meissonier, when he wanted to paint a scene which took

J. J. Henry.

A NAIAD.



SYMBOLISTS, IDEALISTS AND HISTORICAL PAINTERS

place in a snowy landscape, had his garden dusted with plaster to make his models pose there on lay-figures of horses. This authentic detail will suffice to show the true nature of his realism. He was, moreover, equally devoid of lyricism, and already to-day there is no name so forgotten as that of this painter, whose works fetched scandalous prices, and on whom the greatest honours were showered.

His work is continued to-day by Edouard Detaille, about whom the same remarks must be repeated. The war of 1870-71 has raised crowds of military painters. Only one of them has been a pulsating and moving artist, namely Alphonse de Neuville, who painted with dash, with beautiful qualities of improvisation and fervent feeling. His sketches are particularly remarkable, notably that of the *Capture of Bourget* and the *Attack on a Burning House*. The panoramas of *Rezonville* and of *Champigny*, in the painting of which Neuville and Detaille were collaborators, contain admirable passages, and it is easy to detect each artist's share in the work: whatever movement and expression there is, is the work of Neuville's brush. Aimé Morot's cavalry charges are more pretentious than true to life. M. Roll has painted a war picture which has at least the qualities of solidity and truth: the faces are true to life, the gestures natural, the details in accordance with the sad reality. This is the full list of works worth mentioning by living painters in a branch of art which, at the beginning of the century, had been admirably understood by Charlet and Raffet in their eloquent and nervous works, inspired by the Imperial epopee and appreciative of the humble heroism of the people, as opposed to the declamatory battles by the painters of the School.

Historical painting proper has only found a great, truthful interpreter at the end of the century. Jean-Paul Laurens has approached this *genre* with the spirit of Augustin-Thierry and of Michelet. His illustrations for the *Récits des temps mérovingiens*, and his canvases depicting the history of the Franks, the inquisitors, and the Albigensian wars, are documents of great interest and noble works of art; they are heavy in manner, but powerful in colour and broad in drawing. The School is wrong in claiming for itself the fame of this free and honest artist who has nothing of its mediocrity and looks upon life sincerely and enthusiastically. His decoration at the Pantheon, depicting the

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

death of Saint Geneviève, is more of a picture than a mural painting, but is full of beautiful passages. Laurens has really succeeded in conveying the cold, mystical and barbaric impression of the sad Merovingian palaces, of ascetic or brutal figures and the silhouettes of monks and warriors. He has also grasped the Revolution, and had the skill in his *Death of Marceau* and some sketches, to give his painting a grand, eloquent character. He loves beautiful low tones, reds, browns, thick velvet, and steel, and expresses them with great richness. He has painted Languedoc landscapes with fond love of his native soil; he is a great artist and an innovator in the *genre* of his choice.

Religious history has within the last few years enlisted an unexpected recruit in James Tissot, a painter of fashionable scenes, who undertook a large series of water-colour compositions dealing with the life of Christ. This work embodies a considerable number of curious documents. It was conceived in a spirit too exclusively realistic, and the pictorial qualities are frequently not up to the height of the amazing expenditure of erudition. Among the crowd of historical painters who exhibit at the Salons of to-day, M. Georges Rochegrosse is by far the most remarkable, if we except Laurens. He, too, has the feeling for history, but very different from that of School, of which he was a brilliant pupil. Passionately interested in the ancient Orient, and in Assyrian, Roman and Punic civilization, he has painted numerous pictures, the best of which are *Andromache*, *The Death of Babylon*, *The Death of Caesar*, the *Jacquerie*, the *Assassination of Geta*, and the *Queen of Sheba*. In all these works may be found a blending of violent realism with a colouring influenced by Delacroix, and an erudition which controls the slightest objects, reconstructs round great events the familiar life of the ancients, and offers a vivid contrast to all the triteness of academic scenes by bringing us into proximity with extinct races. M. Rochegrosse loves the Orient and knows its languages, its theogonies and myths; his illustrations of *Salammbô* and *Herodias* are the most complete and the most exact of all works dealing with the ancient world. He has also tried his powers successfully in allegory and scenes of modern life. He is an important representative of a forsaken branch of painting, which he revives, infusing into it a strange vitality enamoured of luxury and of blood.



Delaroche.

DEATH OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

SYMBOLISTS, IDEALISTS AND HISTORICAL PAINTERS

Here the review of historical painting in the nineteenth century may close. It is the *genre* which has produced the smallest number of lasting works, which is explained by the orientation of the successive movements of the century and by the very nature of the historical *genre*. A supremely interesting book could be written under the title of a History of Emotion traced through the centuries. The chapter on nineteenth-century art would no doubt prove that during this century emotion has to a perceptible degree become more deeply seated in the soul. The age



MANET
THE HOTHOUSE

of the fresco is past; it has been replaced by that incorporeal fresco which is called "the orchestra," and music and poetry have expressed psychological sensations which were unknown to preceding periods. Art has become suggestive rather than direct, the luxury of costumes has disappeared, and the human being is only pictorially interesting through his face and hands. The scientific spirit has made symbolism enter upon a new phase which is being worked out, and will, perhaps, become the theme for a whole new school, but we have as yet only reached the symptoms of this possibility. At any rate, it is no more possible to deduce the consequences, than to foresee what the use of

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

metal will lead to in the architecture of the future, which is as yet only in a geometrical phase, a kind of "Doric style" of iron. It was only logical that the nineteenth century, critical and fond of innovations, and engaged upon determining the laws of the beauty of character and observing the *milieux*, should have found that the symbolism transmitted by antiquity was exhausted, without taking the time to rejuvenate it. Moreover, realism has been transposed to the point of finding in the most ordinary spectacles of life a significance of inward symbolism, and considering all things as signs of ideas, and consequently as symbols. What were formerly known as dreamy, in the proper sense of the word, have passed entirely into the sphere of music. To all these causes must be attributed the degeneracy of the *genres* which we have just examined.

CHAPTER VII

THE THEORIES OF IMPRESSIONISM

The new technique, inaugurated by a group of artists from 1865 to 1875.—The dissociation of tones: the illogical character of local colour: reflections, harmony.—Some thoughts on the idea in painting, and the academic and the modern conceptions of it.—Character and beauty of expression in Manet.—Renoir, Berthe Morisot, and their circle.—Pointillism and neo-impressionism.—Merits and defects of impressionism: its effect upon technique.—Its possible applications.—Its part in the evolution of the century.

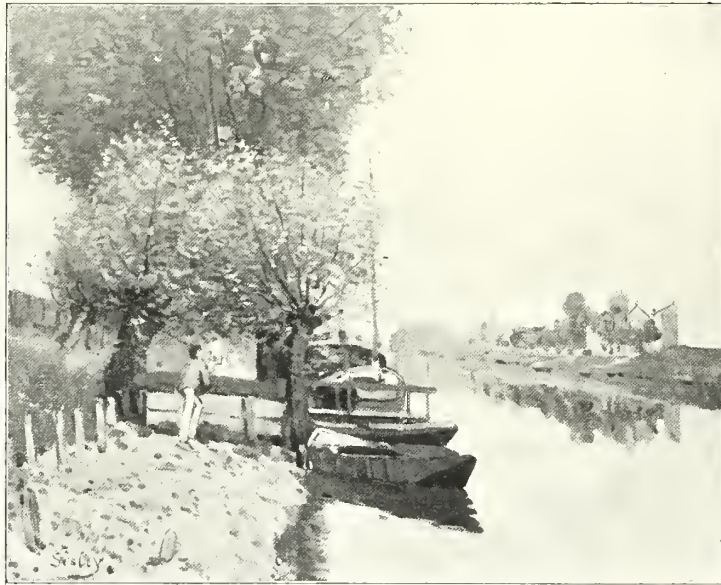
IN the preceding chapters I have already touched upon a certain number of principles contested by the School and developed by the characterists and modern realists. Chronology and logical necessity lead me now to speak of impressionism which has united all these principles, and has in a way been the summit of the efforts of the independent artists during the last third of the century. Even the painters who did not adopt its theories, were influenced by its liberal, anti-dogmatic and traditionalist spirit, and it has even modified the social condition of the artist. This, therefore, is the right moment to explain what this theoretical movement consists in.

It has two parallel phases: modernism, that is the substitution of the beauty of character for the beauty of proportion, and the reform of technique. I have already summed up the first phase, and will now try to explain the generous principles of the second. They touch in some ways upon the recent scientific discoveries in optics and chromatism and may be thus recapitulated:

All objects are bathed in, and coloured by, atmosphere. A picture is therefore not a representation of the objects, but of the atmosphere in which they are placed, and that above all, since we perceive colours, and colours are due to the unequal intensity of the waves of light, as shown by the analysis of the solar spectrum. The seven colours of the spectrum are, like the seven notes of the scale, or like the alphabet, a source of infinite combinations. Shadows are lights differently coloured,

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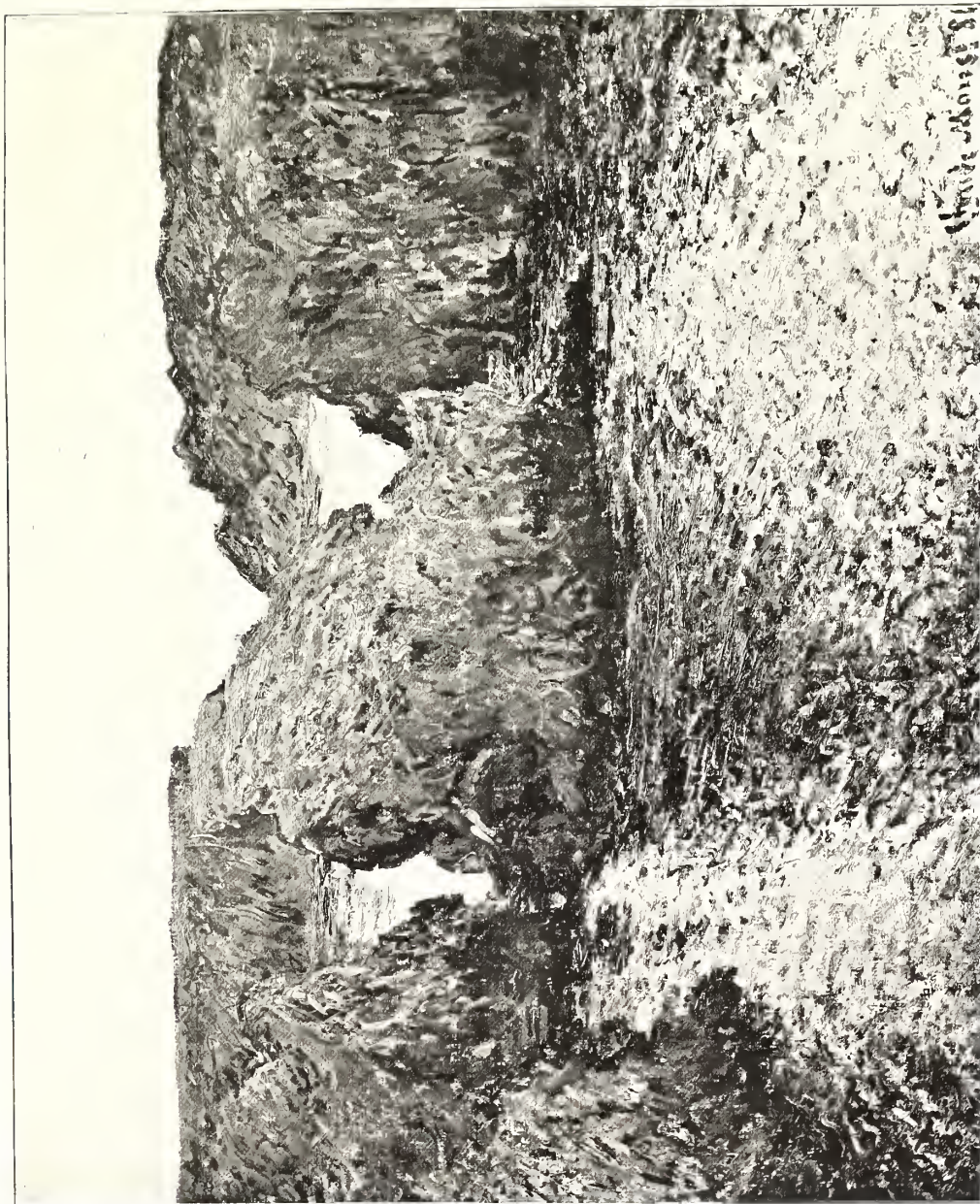
since absence of colour would be nothingness, and every colour is but a particular quantity of light. Drawing is a mere illusion, and linear drawing is an invention of man, thanks to which he specifies the separation of the colours from each other, that is to say the forms. Drawing is as much an abstraction as the lines used in geometry to represent the distances between different points. In reality there are only volumes and planes which meet and pass into each other by indistinguishable gradations.



SISLEY

BOUGIVAL, AT THE WATER'S EDGE

All colouring is obtained by the parallel juxtaposition of waves of light, and a scientific analysis will show the seven colours of the spectrum in larger or lesser quantities. These parallel waves appear to us blended, because they meet in our eye, where the retina plays the part of a convex lens. In reality, in Nature and in light, *atomic dissociation* makes it impossible for red, green, or yellow to exist by themselves. A lens or the eye recomposes them through concentration. It follows that, according to the hourly inclination of the solar rays, the waves of light reach us in proportion to the wider or narrower angle, or quicker or slower course of the waves. These degrees of incidence and of speed determine the con-



Claude Monck.

THE ROCKS OF BELLE-ISLE.

THE THEORIES OF IMPRESSIONISM

stant variations of tonality. Nothing has therefore a fixed colour, and the *local colour* of an object has no more real existence than its lines. It must also be taken into consideration that the different radiations of the objects influence each other, and that reflections thus play a principal part in colouring.

Nothing is separated or complete in Nature, and we know nothing of matter which is imponderable. Planes and perspectives are only known to us through the movement and the time taken in travelling



SISLEY
SNOW EFFECT

over them: a child has no notion of distance and sees objects near and far as though they were painted on the same plane and equally near to its eye. No surface is limited. We know life only through the vibration of the waves of light, which hangs like a curtain over every object. Painting, which has only two dimensions of space at its disposal, can therefore only have the vision of the child. It suggests volumes and distances by variations of colour, that is to say, by the *value* of the radiations of each object, and only by means of this artifice can it produce the impression of distance, although it has only a plane, vertical surface at its disposal.

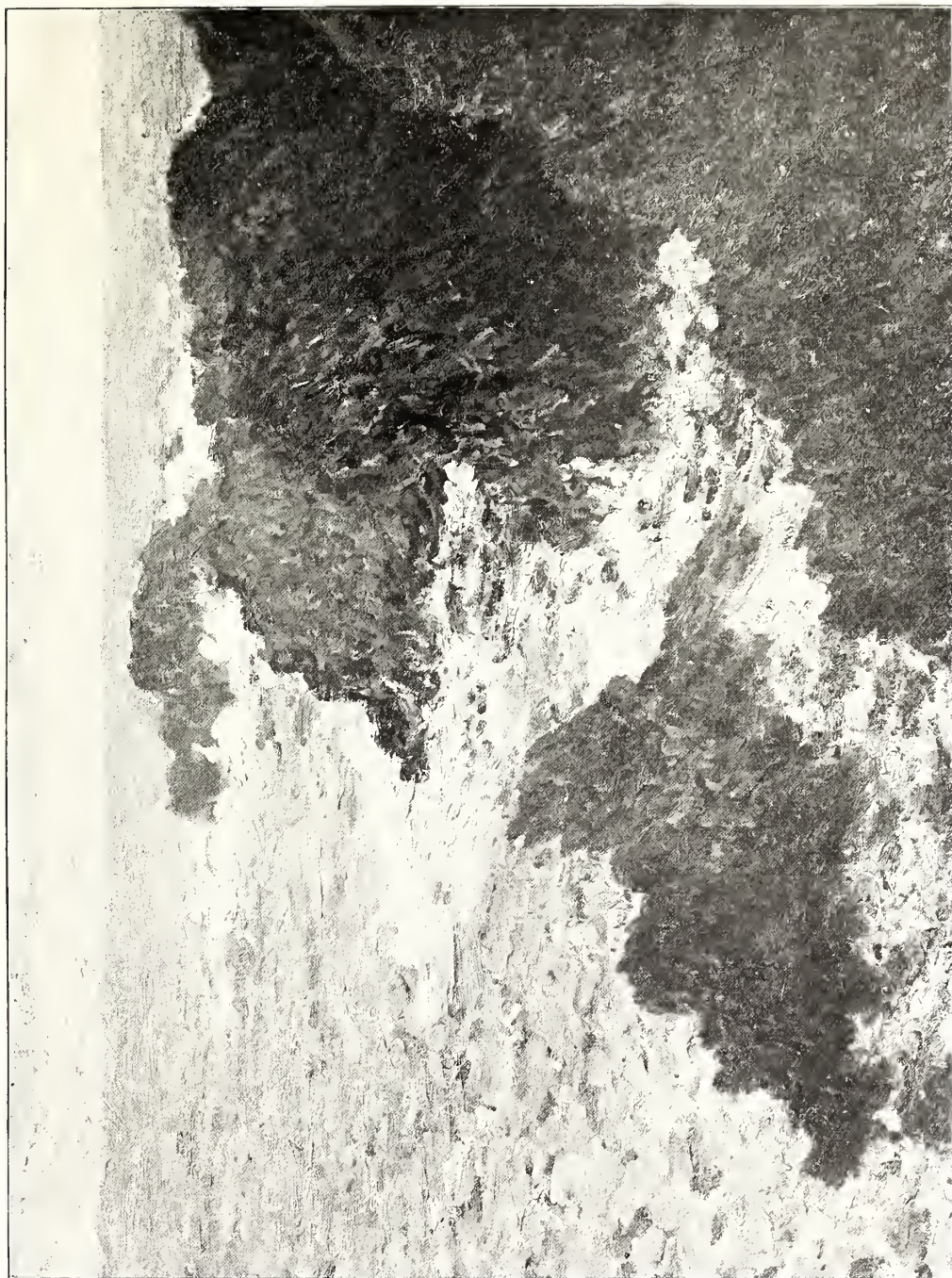
THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

These few physical notions have led impressionism to its essential principles.

Claude Monet's idea was to do as far as possible as Nature does, in adopting the principle of the *dissociation of tones*. Instead of approximately mixing upon the palette the different colours, of which the apparent colour of an object is composed, and thus obtaining a certain tone to be transferred to the canvas, the painter thought it better to juxtapose upon the canvas in different quantities and in parallel touches the colours of the spectrum, so that at a certain distance a recomposition takes place upon the retina of the spectator's eye, just as it happens in Nature. The advantage of this process is technically this: the mixtures of colours in Nature remain brilliant, because they are the result of vibrations of light. On the palette, the colours of the paints, when mixed, become a dirty, grayish mixture. The blending of all the different colours in the spectrum forms a brilliant white, the very essence of light, but with our paints this operation is impossible. It is therefore necessary to preserve each tone pure, and thus, in juxtaposition, it will retain its individual brilliancy. Moreover this juxtaposition of a multitude of small touches will produce upon the eye the impression of the vibration of natural light.

This theory of the dissociation of tones was systematized by Monet and is confirmed by the discoveries made in optics and chromatism by Chevreul and Helmholtz. But it had been foreseen by Watteau (his *Embarkment for Cythera* proves it), by Turner, Claude Lorrain, Bonington, Delacroix, and finally by Monticelli, who are the true precursors of technical impressionism. With Monet it was the result of a natural wish to get as much light as possible, and he applied it to landscape painting. We shall see how Manet and Renoir have applied it to the figure.

The impressionist thus endeavours to reduce drawing and colouring to a symmetrical accumulation of touches of pure colours, and to use the colours in varying proportions according to the hour at which the painting is done and the reciprocal reflections of the objects. The shadows appear to him, like the lighted parts, as mixtures in which certain tones dominate, as for instance, the blue and emerald green in a cluster of trees placed against the light. Nevertheless he finds in them, in a lesser degree, all the colours of light which penetrate to a greater or smaller

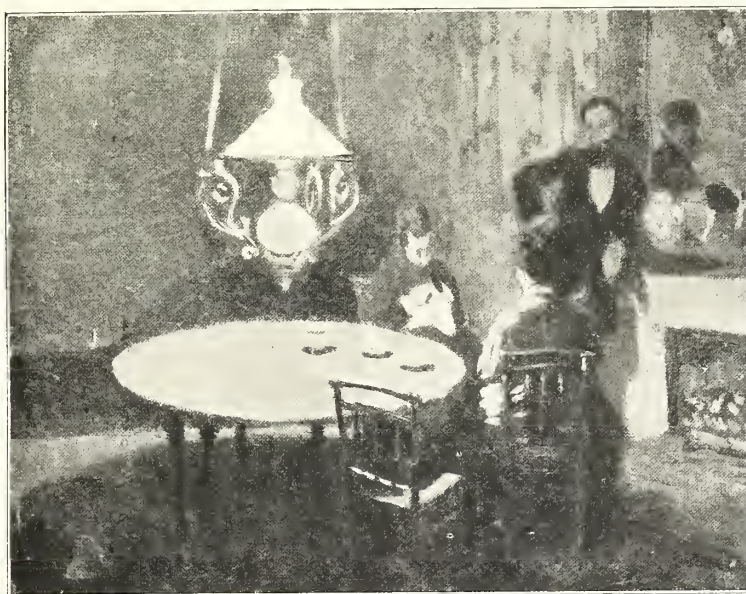


Claude Monet.

ON THE BRETON COAST.

THE THEORIES OF IMPRESSIONISM

extent, and without which the shadow would be opaque; and we may actually see in Claude Monet's shadows a great number of orange, pink and red particles which are also found in Nature and give the shadow its transparency and vital warmth. The School, on the contrary, only considered shadow as the opposite extreme of light, as non-light, and thus the painters of the School have restricted themselves to expressing shadow by bituminous mixtures, destined to set off in an easy manner



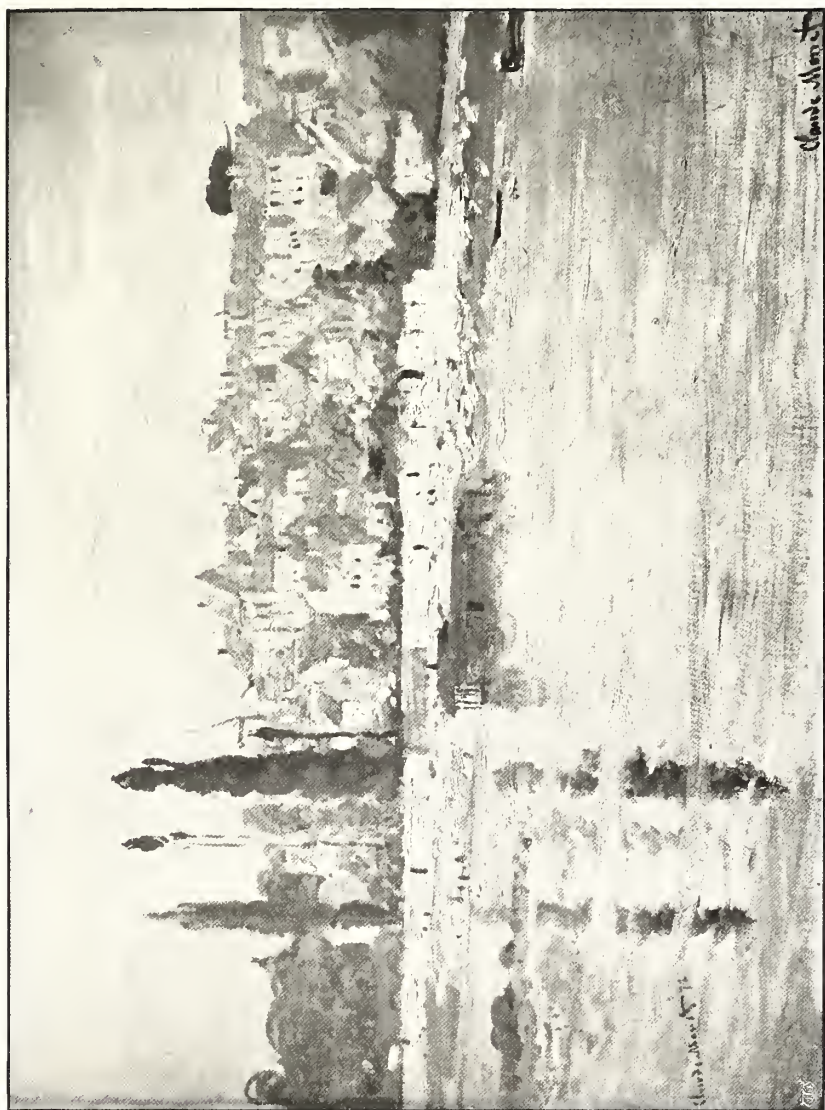
CLAUDE MONET
AN INTERIOR, AFTER DINNER

the lighted parts. If the picture represents an interior with indirect light (a room, the window of which is not to be seen), this light determines all the same the reflections which destroy the *local colour* of the objects, and in all the colours, light or dark, will be found again the seven tints of the solar spectrum. Finally, at the arbitrary outline of a silhouette an exchange of vibrations takes place between the object and the sky, an intermediary, connecting tint appears; and Claude Monet never fails to note this zone of reflections. In his landscapes it is impossible to see the passing of a tree-top or the crest of a hill into the atmosphere, unless it be through the vibration of tones which emanate at the same time from

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the azure and from the foliage at a certain distance around the point where we believe we see the tree or the hill *end*.

According to the hour of the day some particular colour predominates in the atmosphere, and consequently a painted landscape is the reasoned development of the reflections of this predominant colour. Here we touch upon the identification of painting with music. A sound and a colour are equivalent. A picture takes orange or green for its theme, and develops these colours, just as a musician takes D minor for the theme of a sonata. It follows that, just as the idea in music may be defined as the harmonic development of a sound, the idea in painting is the harmonic development of a colour. Whether this colour be used for the representation of a goddess, a room, or a boat, concerns an entirely different order of ideas, which is abstract. The pictorial idea or thought is, on close and rigorous analysis, intimately connected with colour. The painter thinks *first* in orange or in red, and *then*, as human being, he thinks of the *subject* he is going to paint. And here we come to the very point where impressionism and realism clash with the School. The latter reverses this point of view in considering the art of painting as the *means* of expressing an abstract, literary idea, which might as well be treated by poetry or music; for the School, the idea in painting need not be especially *pictorial*. The idea is confounded with the subject, with the sentiment, with the symbol or the allegory; it remains a general element which is *treated* by painting, as it might be by other arts. The conception which I have just explained the School calls realism, narrow, unintelligent vision, absence of idea, without perceiving that itself destroys the very essential of painting in its notion of *elevating* it. This concern about elevating is the great mistake of the School; it only thinks of elevating Nature, just as though Nature needed it, as though her best elevation were not the artist's respectful expression and study of what he sees face to face with her. This mistake springs from a false, philosophic belief: that of the superiority of ideas over matter, just as if, especially in a plastic art, any idea or emotion did not come to us through this matter which false, sentimental idealism affects to despise; as if, finally, we did not find at the bottom of the study of matter the certainty that it is as ideological as any "incorporeal" ideas, since it can be reduced to rhythm which is the very principle and thought of life. The spirit of the



Claude Monet.

LANDSCAPE.

THE THEORIES OF IMPRESSIONISM

School is entirely based on the ancient, scholastic conception of the distinction between the physical and the moral, the ideal and the real, a distinction which the psychological nineteenth century has reduced to nothing. And this has led it to a most fatal separation of the subject from its visible realization. We shall see later that the School has counted among its partisans men capable of beautiful conceptions, open to literature and philosophy, who might have shone in these spheres, but have got no further than being pretentious and indifferent painters, simply because the idealist ambition of their spirit and the dogmatism of the School made them consider as "low" and "hostile to thought" that realism without which no plastic art is capable of living.

It will now be clear that this realism does not signify, as the School pretended to believe, the exclusive application of painting to the representation of familiar scenes. It is a preliminary condition at the basis of all plastic representation, but there is nothing to indicate that it must needs forbid a mystic or philosophic art. Up to the present it has coincided with a *characterist* art, with the expression of the beauty contained in the spectacles of daily life, and this is to a great extent due to the obstinacy of the School itself in declaring that everything appertaining to contemporary life is low and devoid of beauty. If hatred is aroused for the time in which an artist lives, he is driven to protest, for all beauty is in life, at whatever moment it may be entered, and symbols are constantly renewed. It is the interdict launched by the School against trying to find beauty outside an ideal of proportions, that has created a reaction, opened the painters' eyes, and made them understand that a dogmatism which denies evolution must needs be false and contain a fatal principle. But the parallelism between realism and beauty of character need not necessarily be everlasting, and it is quite possible to conceive that impressionism may serve for the expression of exalted ideas, if not of mysticism and symbolism under their Greek or Christian forms. Impressionism must be considered as a reinstatement of the question on a logical basis, of which it had been robbed by the School, and above all as the first phase of a vast movement, the consequences of which we cannot foresee. Already we see the realist point of view of impressionism overtaken by its application to decorative art. We may also be permitted to foresee a near epoch, when painting, free of the dogmas of the scholastic

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and retrograde spirit, will return to the expression of an ideal and a symbolism consistent with modern sensibility and with philosophy, sociology and the religious idea, as our science and customs make us conceive them. Characterist beauty will be modified, and we shall see, on the other hand, that intimism brings it strangely near ideality in a painter like Eugène Carrière. But I must not insist upon this future before the conclusion of this book, and my subject compels me to confine myself to the actual state of an evolution of which impressionism has beneficially instigated the beginning and furthered the progress.

We have now seen what principles they were which led Claude Monet to paint by means of *dissociated* tones. He is the creator and technician of impressionism through the national application of this system. When Manet, after 1870, undertook *plein air* painting, he preserved nevertheless his broad manner, his touches of colour that has been mixed on the palette; he obtained his luminous effects by strong contrasts, and, above all, by very close observation of half-tones rather than by the dissociation of tones. As a matter of fact his temperament found such means repugnant. Monet's technique gives a picture a laboured and confused aspect, through the accumulation of coloured spots which are incomprehensible when seen close by and only produce the desired effect from a certain distance, whilst Manet loved broad sweeps of paint following almost sculpturally the outlines of the objects represented—what the true traditional painters call “*une belle matière*.” And Manet always preserved his preoccupation with modern character. The works of his second period are purely French in style, and in this lies their chief merit. In his portraits of ladies in gardens and in his street scenes he observed the intermediary tones in admirable fashion. It may be said of him, that he gave the word impressionism more the sense of “investigation of impression.” The more he painted, the more his style gained in breadth, and his last canvases are extraordinary in their sureness of indication. With a few touches value and movement are synthetized, and to this synthesis Manet finds it useless to add anything. It is this notation—summary in appearance, but in reality due to profound mastery—which leaves to these pictures the savoury vivacity and all the enticing qualities of a sketch. In this spirit he painted, between 1870 and 1883, the *Père Lathuile*, the *Café-Concert*,



Renoir.

THE COUNTRY DANCE.

THE THEORIES OF IMPRESSIONISM

the *Bar of the Folies-Bergère*, the *Bench*, *Argenteuil*, *Nana*, his portraits of women, his studies of flowing waters, his sketches of Venice, his gardens, his fish and flower still-life pieces, this whole series of beautiful, living and "singing" pages which are impressed with a kind of nobility, have the healthy and robust aspect of the old masters' lineage, and leave, among all the subtle and complex canvases of recent art, so strong an impression of freedom, loyal simplicity and virginity of vision. It is difficult to know which to admire most of the two periods



MANET
THE BAR AT THE FOLIES-BERGÈRE

of Manet's enormous production, which end one epoch and begin another. His is certainly the typical work, the work which sums up the different agitations of independent art in the nineteenth century.

In the group of admirers who gathered round Manet, a group which was formed first by the realists, and then by painters of various conceptions, who were joined only later by the impressionists, a division must be made among so many talents. The engraver Bracquemond, the painter-etcher Legros, the mysterious and genial Whistler belonged to it, as did also Fantin-Latour, a painter of the most austere and conventionalized reality, and at the same time of the most magical of

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

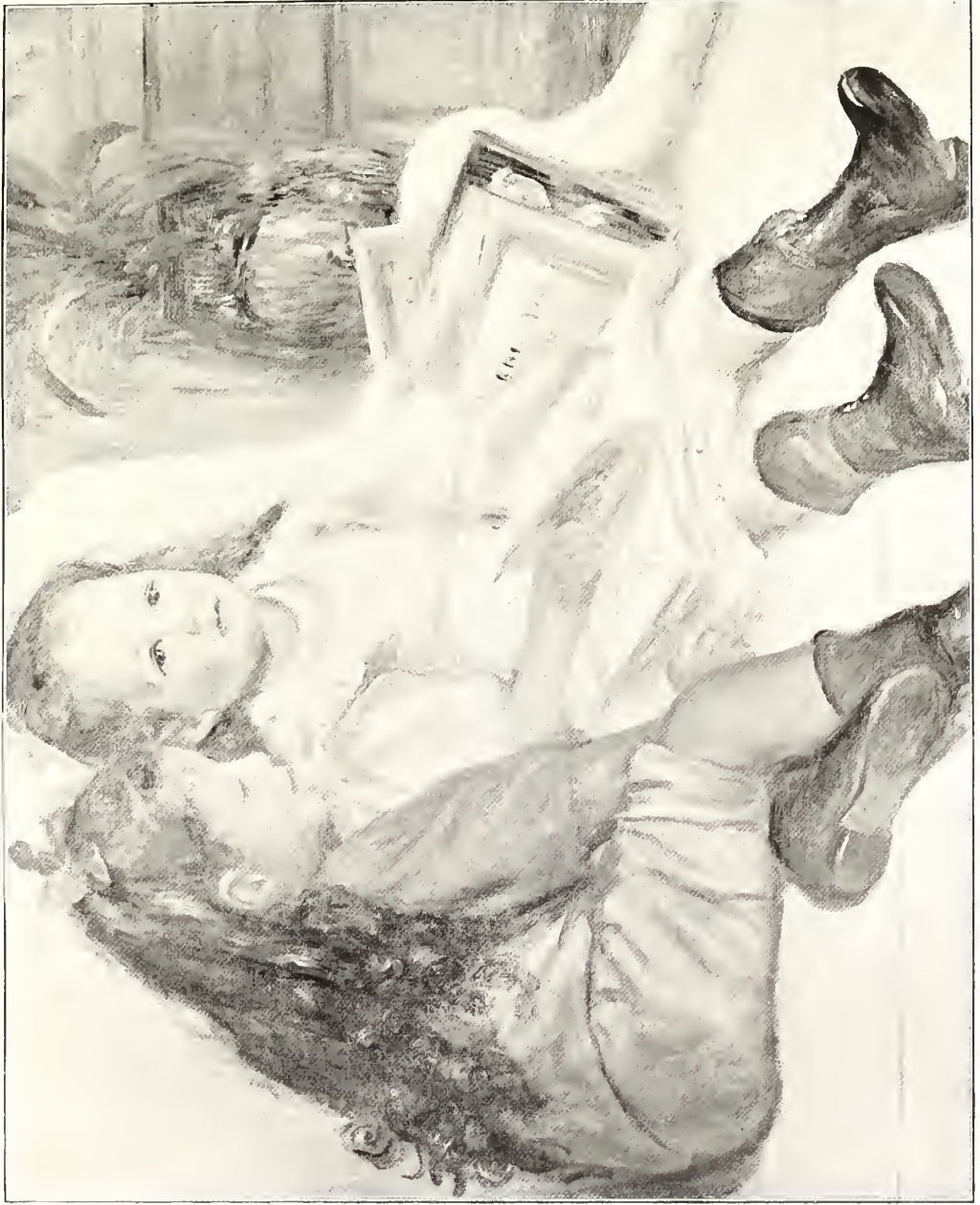
dreams. It will therefore be useful to draw a distinction between all these temperaments who only agreed upon the necessity of destroying the prejudices of the School, between the characterists and the impressionists proper. These latter are, to tell the truth, the men who have followed Monet's technique, combining it with the investigation of modern character. And for this reason they have to be separated in criticism from Manet and Degas. In their train must also be put the exquisite work of Berthe Morisot, although it is also directly related to



BERTHE MORISOT
MELANCHOLY

Renoir. She was the sister-in-law of Manet whose posthumous fame she defended with great energy. Berthe Morisot is the Vigée-Lebrun of impressionism. Her portraits of women, her children in thickets, her Southern landscapes, her seascapes, and, above all, her astounding water colours are as delicate, as masterly, as light and as truly French, as could well be imagined. They are full of very feminine gracefulness and exceptional energy of accent.

Very directly dependent on Monet are landscapists like Guillaumin, Pissarro, Sisley, Gauguin, and to a certain extent the excellent painter Gustave Caillebotte, who was a devoted friend of the impressionists,



Renoir.

THE CHILDREN OF M. C.

THE THEORIES OF IMPRESSIONISM

bought a fine collection of their works, and bequeathed it to the Luxembourg Gallery, thus provoking a memorable quarrel between the Academicians who used all their influence to induce the State to decline the gift, and independent criticism which, stronger then than during the heroic epoch of impressionism, triumphed over these obstacles. Caillebotte's work deserves to be known and appreciated. Among Manet's disciples must be counted, on the other hand, the young painter Bazille, killed in 1870, who would have been a great artist if one may judge



BERTHE MORISOT
YOUNG WOMAN SEATED

from the works he has left. But I must speak now of a very great personality, a real master, Auguste Renoir, who seems to be the personification of impressionism in its entirety. His varied work combines, as a matter of fact, Monet's technique with Degas's and Manet's characterism, and is individual through a kind of naïve voluptuousness, a pagan joy, a caressing animalism which connects it directly with Boucher and the painters of the end of the eighteenth century, without loss to its thoroughly modern character.

Renoir had two or three kinds of technique. The first is altogether similar to Boucher's. He makes more use of the palette knife than of

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the brush to model in a fat paste, like enamel and kaolin, his nude bathers, who are very white and conventionalized with a strange taste. The whole interest of these figures lies in the drawing of the silhouette and of the volumen. The inner details contained in the volumen are simplified: the colour is very light and the nacreous flesh is relieved by backgrounds in which we may find the blue "*de roi*" particularly affected by Boucher. There is, so to speak, neither light nor shade in these decorative works, but a kind of general brightness in which all objects are bathed. Then the artist attacked the study of modern life and thoroughly modified his technique together with his subjects, with a suppleness which is one of his characteristic traits. He then entered upon the most beautiful period of his career, from 1878 to 1895. He painted landscapes which a little recall Corot and Anton Mauve, and then Monet, and are in no way inferior to the finest works of the last-named. He created large compositions, the *River Picnic*, the *Box*, the *Ball at the Moulin de la Galette*, the *Dance* panels, *On the Terrace*, and the *Young Girl Sleeping*. From all these there shines forth a magnificent painter-poet's nature. His contemporary scenes are as true in attitude and atmosphere, as Manet's and Degas's, but are more subtle than those of the former, without having the ironical bitterness of the latter. Renoir possesses a lyrical faculty which makes him look upon life in a smilingly picturesque way. The *Ball* is very significant from this point of view: whilst Degas did not fail to unite in this popular resort admirable types of the outcast, of degraded faces, cynicism and ugliness, Renoir saw only the spots of sunlight among the green, the joyous colours of the dresses, the gold of the straw hats, the amorous embraces and the whirl of the waltzes, and his vision, though less characteristic and more strictly pictorial, is no less true. The same may be said of the *River Picnic* and of the *Dance* panels, in which he has delighted in noting the grace of young girls of humble condition and their fresh youthfulness under their modest dresses. It may be said that what Manet loves above all is painting, Degas the study of truth, and Renoir life. He loves it passionately, renders it poetical, finds beauty in it everywhere, lacks the faculty of perceiving ugliness, and, above all, never paints anything that is conventional or false. He may be said to have kept the ingenuousness of a child. He loves luxury too,



Turner.

YOUNG GIRLS.

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and has signed some portraits, of which the *Box*, the proper place of which is at the Louvre, is the most admirable instance. Renoir has a special conception of woman; he represents her without thought, like a pretty animal, with jewel eyes, a bright red mouth, and a skin as clear and as silky as the petals of a camellia. He dresses her in a veritable poem of satin and gauze, surrounds her with gold and roses, and sets her against a living background of an abundant mass of hair. In its technique and style the *Box* is a little reminiscent of Reynolds, and sometimes, as again in his *Thought*, Renoir is haunted by recollections of Reynolds and Gainsborough, as well as of Boucher. He loves also little girls and babies, of whom he has painted a considerable series, in a fat manner with touches of the brush that are like caresses; here again his *naïveté* has been of service to him. Unskilled in serious expression, Renoir excels in rendering the awkward gestures, the ignorant looks, the pure flesh of children. He paints little girls with flowing hair, tartan frocks and big, flower-trimmed straw hats, in sun-bathed foliage. He is also an exquisite painter of flowers.



RENOIR
AT THE PIANO

In all this series his technique is alternately that of Monet and of Manet. Yet he blends it sometimes with his old palette-knife method, his paste of sleek, enamel-like paint. In his third and recent manner he seems to have become even more capricious and disconcerting in his mixture of simplicity and subtlety, of apparent ignorance and real science. This fantastic spirit breaks loose from all dogmas, mixes in

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the same picture four or five methods, and seems to find pleasure in confounding them. His drawing gets weaker; he only occupies himself with pure colour; he ventures upon almost discordant harmonies, plays with reflections, strives for the harmonies of Oriental carpets, gives his pictures the appearance of wool, of agate, glass and silk, and is in turn admirable and irritating. His last landscapes of Cannes and Antibes

are less actual views than harmonies, music of singular shades.

He has a particular way of seeing the female nude. He sees the modelling less than the brilliant epidermis. He conceives her as a flower, a wild and charming being, unconscious of her sensuality, and he places her against leaves or upon foaming waters, not like an antique naiad, but almost like an inhabitant of a tropical jungle. There is something of the Oriental in Renoir, an exceptional feeling of the primitiveness of beings and objects; and some of his works are at once barbarous and delicate,



RENOIR
ON THE TERRACE

and suggest a mixture of Boucher, Manet and the Japanese. His excessive fancy has often led him into errors. He is unequal, but always attractive and charming, and in his forty years of activity he has signed an imposing number of masterpieces. It is absolutely scandalous that Renoir's name should only be admired by a restricted number of chosen spirits. There is in Manet a rough boldness, in Monet a new technique which requires an educated eye, in Degas a severity and keen irony, which suffice to explain the repugnance of



Maunt.

POULOGNE HARBOUR—NIGHT EFFECT.

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the public, the slowness of renown. But it is inexplicable that Renoir's work, consisting of nudes, children, smiling scenes and flowers, and so thoroughly French, light and pleasing in colour as it is, should have failed to entice the majority who ignore one of our greatest painters. Only one reason can be adduced: Renoir's secluded life, his indifference to reputation, and, above all, the fact of his having been classed with Manet and his friends in controversy. But, having shared their bad fortune, he will rise with them to full light, and the day is near, when



THÉO VAN RYSSELBERGHE

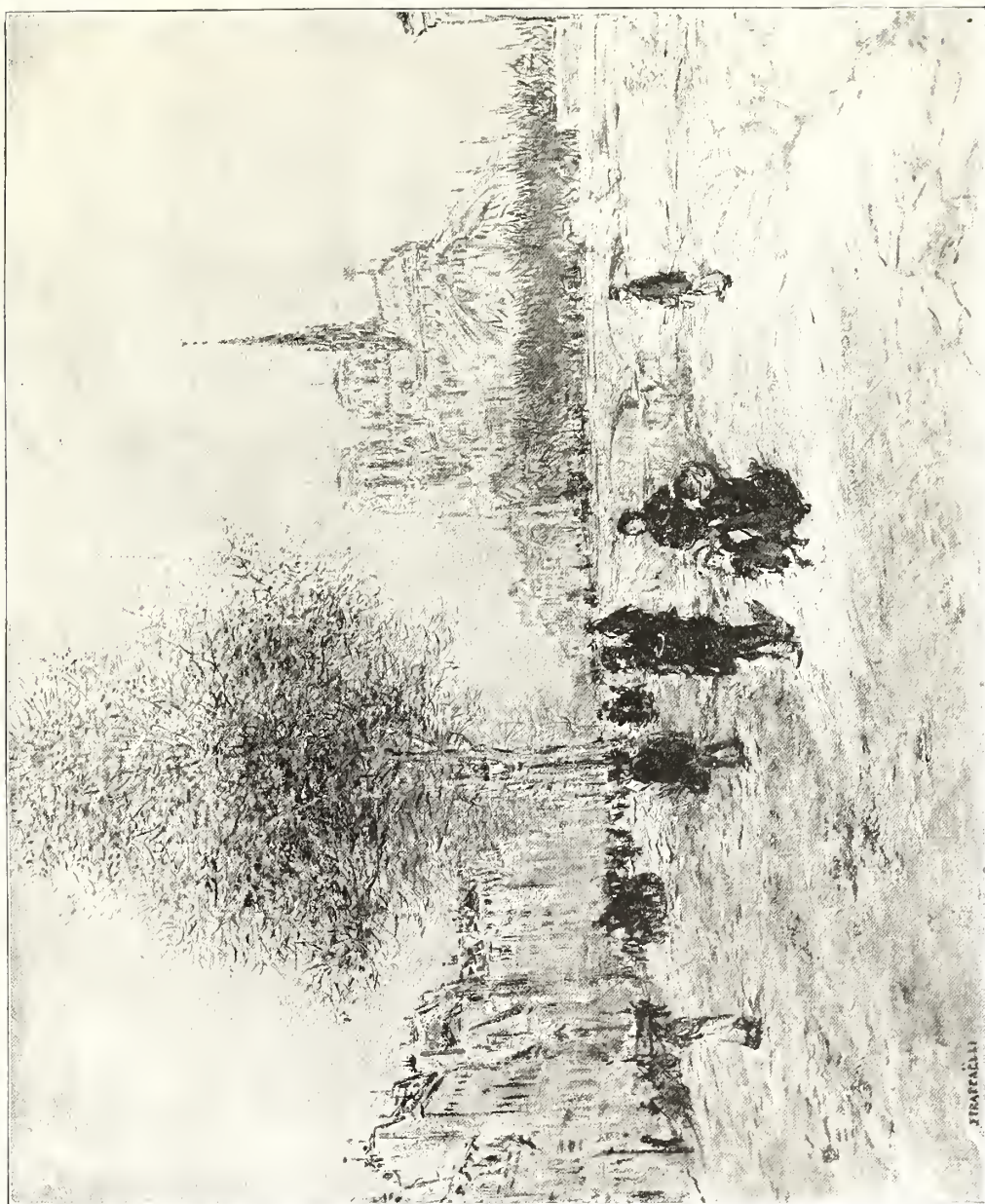
PORTRAITS OF MADAME VAN RYSSELBERGHE AND HER DAUGHTER

people will become aware, with astonishment and regret, of the important position he deserves to occupy. He reflects the whole work of his friends and yet remains thoroughly original. Less powerful than either of them separately in his own *genre*, he surpasses them all in the abundant variety and the ubiquity of his vision. He has more freshness, more youth, more frankly national spirit, than his friends. In no one more clearly than in Renoir may be seen the effect of his vocation, incapable of reasoning, and obeying only his own intuition. Of his whole generation he is certainly the artist who best demonstrates the French origin of impressionism and its descent from eighteenth-century art.

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To the impressionist theories a corollary was added about 1885. A certain number of young painters tried to give Monet's ideas on the dissociation of tones scientific sanction. Under the influence of the theories of Chevreul, Helmholtz, Lippmann and Charles Henry, they conceived of the regular application of the laws of refraction to painting and invented the so-called *pointillist* method. That is to say, instead of simply obeying their instinct, like Monet, and of noting the different derivatives of the colours by means of accumulating more or less symmetrical spots, they replaced these spots by spherical points, the relief of which lent itself less readily to collecting dust and the uniform roundness of which would act more easily upon the eye. They calculated systematically the scales of shades in a landscape that would necessarily create the difference of the principal tones. The principle of this neo-impressionism was theoretically correct; but art is too spontaneous, too much mingled with instinct, to obey a system, and the works of the adepts of pointillism were angular, cold and lifeless. Besides, nearly all of them have one by one abandoned this point of view, except M. Signac, who was its theorist, and M. Théo van Rysselberghe, who may be said to possess great talent in spite of this technique. The first pointillists were M. Signac, a painter of seascapes and of decorative scenes; Georges Seurat, who was a real artist and died prematurely; Vincent van Gogh, who met with a tragic end after having painted some beautiful pieces; and finally the painters Maurice Denis, Pierre Bonnard, whom we shall find again among the decorators, and Edouard Vuillard, whom we shall find again among the intimists. Moreover, these painters set their faces in widely diverging directions, some as realists, others under the influence of the Japanese, and others again as symbolists. Pointillism, around which Pissarro and Toulouse-Lautrec had rallied for a short while, deserves to be mentioned in a history of modern painting, if only as a curiosity; but it has ceased to have logical action.

Among the impressionists a few composite temperaments deserve mention, the most characteristic of whom is M. Anquetin. He goes in for several *genres*, and has painted some excellent portraits, landscapes, subject-pictures and decorative compositions, all testifying to an equal talent, sometimes influenced by the Japanese, sometimes by the Re-



J. F. Raffaelli.

NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS.

THE THEORIES OF IMPRESSIONISM

naissance; but the most evident of all influences upon him is that of Manet, whose breadth, vigour and frankness he has sometimes succeeded in attaining. In fine, it is impossible to note the innumerable outcomes of impressionism. It is due to the very variety of its masters that all the painters of to-day are more or less affected by it, either as regards their manner of painting or their characterism; none of them would be what he is if this movement had never existed. For the majority of them it has been a kind of initiation: how many painters who had received the lessons of the School have to thank impressionism for the revelation of the false road they had embarked upon? Even those who derive their art from a very different vision acknowledge the force of this moral influence, this energetic invitation to artistic liberalism. Based upon impressionism, a certain number of painters, like Besnard and Chéret, have begun to develop quite a different style, and, when examining these, I shall remind the reader of the part played by Manet and Degas in their development.

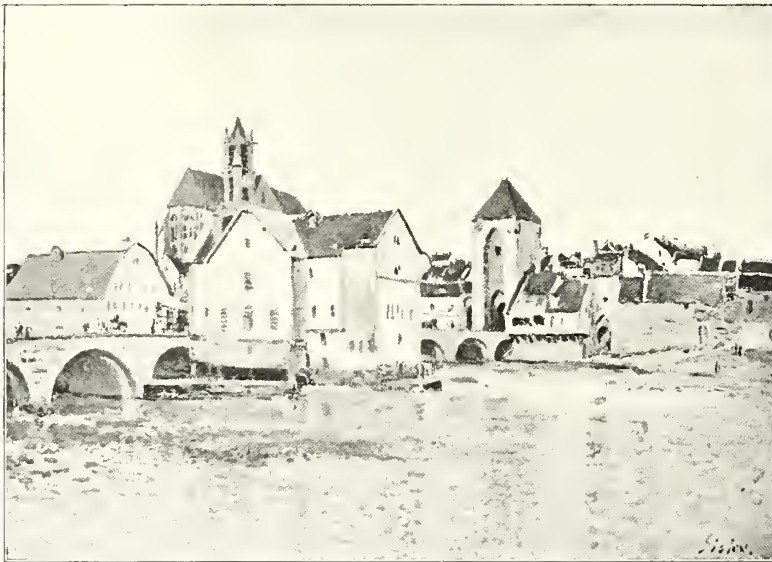


RENOIR
WOMAN'S BUST

It cannot be said that impressionism has been without faults. Too often it has given proof of weakness in drawing; it has contented itself with sketches; it has lacked style; and it has given an artificial impression. But in weighing its good and bad points it must not be forgotten that it has been placed in the worst conditions; without encouragement, poor and despised, its artists have passed through twenty-five years of conflict. They have experienced the difficulties

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which every movement of transition has to contend with: the gropings, the hesitations and the excesses peculiar to those who have at the same time to free themselves from one state of mind and to invent another. Never have artists lived in a more turbulent period. It is none the less true, that impressionism has had several merits. First of all it has introduced a new theory. Furthermore, it has contributed greatly towards renovating the vision and liberating art from blackness and conventional nobleness. It has taken up again the thread of the national tradition, in spite of those who pretended to guard it. It has created a



SISLEY
BRIDGE AT MORET

beauty of expression and has had the honour and the courage to search for it in its own epoch. It has loved life and Nature healthily and sincerely. It has created a new era of landscape painting. The sum total of these claims justifies an impartial consideration of impressionism, first of all as the greatest pictorial movement of the second part of the nineteenth century, and then, as one of the most significant movements which has sprung up ever since the first days of painting in France. Even those critics who will not love it for its vision and results will in the future be obliged to devote to it a very thorough study. It is distinctly more autochthonous than romanticism which is mingled with

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numerous foreign influences. Delacroix was, like Hugo, a genius impressed by English and Spanish tragedy from the imaginative point of view, and by the Venetian and Dutch masters from the technical point of view. Rousseau and Corot derived their art from the Dutch, and Corot's veiled poetry, however spontaneous it may be, is not without analogy to that of the lake-poets, the poets of the German *lied* and Virgil. Courbet's realistic reaction against the School tended above all to oppose true to false classicism. But the advent of impressionism gathered up all previous French characteristics and found all its subjects in the contemplation of Nature. It may be said that this generation made a clear sweep of all by which it had been preceded, and began the whole art of painting anew by attacking a canvas in the open air. It was certainly the beginning of a new art, a new form of human sensibility. And morally it was certainly the revelation of a new principle that cannot be traced to the School. The School has



RENOIR
YOUNG WOMAN IN EMPIRE COSTUME

always ended by compromising with the great independents, and even by timidly borrowing from them certain ideas. It formed Delaroche out of romanticism; of rustic painting it accepted Jules Breton—that is to say, it has tried to follow from afar the spirit of the century, diminishing it and leading it back, as best it could, to its own dogmas. But it has not been able to borrow anything from impressionism. To admit but one point would have annulled its creed. One or the other had to perish! And that is why the School has made this struggle a question of life and death, and cried out desperately against the decadence of art.

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It is a sad rule that innovators are always received with the accusation of being decadent, but never, perhaps, has such unrelenting animosity been witnessed. It wanted very little for Manet and Renoir to have shared the fate of Chardin, of Millet, of Monticelli, or of Daumier, who died misunderstood and miserable; and the energy, the conviction and the artistic integrity of the impressionists do not by any means constitute their least claims to future esteem. To-day, although their work is as yet little known to the great public who have looked at it suspiciously and have been fed on false doctrines about it—to-day the strength of their independence has brought in question the utility of the School, and definitely turned away from it the timorous respect of the young artists. There were some principles which it seemed impossible to eradicate, a hierarchy which was felt to be bad, but against which nobody would have ventured to rise. Without the support of the press, without authority or fortune, the impressionists have dared to raise a protest which, after twenty-five or thirty years, has been understood. They have given time for growing up to a whole generation which enters to-day into full possession of its public rights. Excluded from the Salons, they began to appear there again, in bright canvases, the invasion of which no discouraged juries can stop. Every day there may be seen bold attempts which, twenty years ago, would have been declared sheer madness, and the ordinary public who still hear the impressionists spoken of as hoaxers and mystificators, admire, without being aware of it, works for which these very painters are responsible.

Thus the evolution of French painting is placed again upon traditional and logical bases. The only danger to guard against is the discovery some day on its way of a new *Ecole de Rome*, a system of ideas similar to that which the German Emperor, according to his recent discourses, seems to intend imposing upon Germanic art. It is a significant detail which should be mentioned, even if it concerns the question of art only indirectly, that, although the impressionists have always been refused admission to the Salons, although they are very badly represented and hung at the Luxembourg Gallery and have received no French decoration, except Manet, whom Antonin Proust decorated the year before his death, and Renoir who was remembered after he had passed threescore years,—that their works have been demanded by many

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of the great galleries of Europe, and are now realizing considerable prices on both sides of the Atlantic. This is an interesting symptom. As regards the technical influence of impressionism abroad, I may be allowed to say a few words, although it does not come within the scope of this book. Liebermann, in Germany; Kroyer, in Denmark; Thaulow and Zorn, in Norway; Claus, van Rysselberghe and Baertson, in Belgium; Harrisson, Alexander and Sargent, in America; the Glasgow School, in England; Michetti and Segantini, in Italy; and Sorella y Bastida and Zuloaga, in Spain, all occupy important positions and fight vigorously against the ideas and influence of the School, which are the same at Antwerp, Düsseldorf and Vienna as at the Institute in Paris. All over the artistic world impressionism creates groups of disciples, and disciples, too, who set about copying it in maladroit fashion, with the same impersonality and the same lack of comprehension with which they would have copied the work of the Academy. But it need not be feared that impressionism will in its turn become a School and create commonplace epigones of another kind. It is actually the negation of all dogmatism; it gives examples and not lessons; it teaches artists to have but one master—Nature; to consider independence as the only valuable dogma, and to be above all sincere, to educate themselves, to accept no ready-made idea, and to consider as the real mystificators those people who pretend to know the secrets of art and to transmit them, because there are no secrets but those in the microcosm of the individual conscience, and because everybody carries within himself his vision, his birth and his death, his formulas and his dreams.

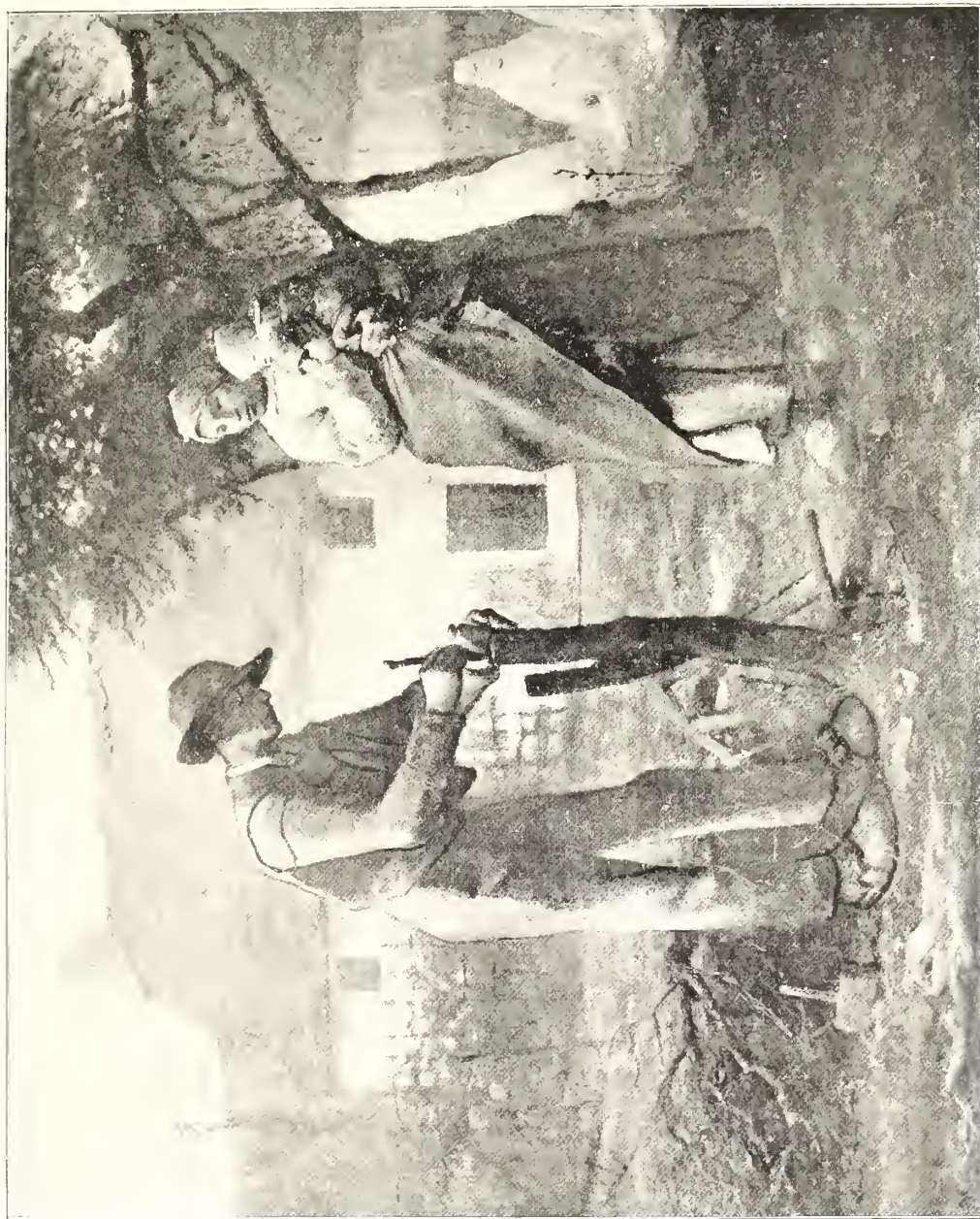
CHAPTER VIII

THE INTIMISTS

Definition of intimism.—Psychologic poetry in painting: the soul of objects.—Millet and his work.—Cazin, de Nittis, Dagnan, Pointelin, Carrière, Le Sidaner.—Some modern painters.—The painting of twilight and of silence.—Rustic, Breton, and nocturnal painting.

WHAT do we mean by intimism? At the moment of creating a new word, when criticism is already misapplying it, what sense are we to attach to it? It is evident that in the French and English languages alone this word can specify a certain intrusion of the psychologic ideal into the art of painting, a revelation of the soul through the things painted, the magnetic suggestion of what lies behind them through the description of the outer appearance, the *intimate meaning* of the spectacles of life. This intimate meaning is not exactly the symbolism or the mysticism of the primitives or of the allegorists of the Renaissance, who combined natural elements from the point of view of personal conception. It confines itself to expressing so much of their depth as objects and beings, as we perceive them, allow us to divine—the daily tragedy and mystery of ordinary existence, and the latent poetry of things. This poetry is not imposed by the painter's vision. He takes it where he finds it, and shows it where one would not expect to find it; he brings forth the psychologic elements in an art which seems reserved for purely external expression.

This *intimism* is comparatively recent. Although the outcome of an almost contemporary evolution of the human spirit, it had already found its most beautiful realizations in the Dutchmen, Ver Meer, Terburg, Hobbema and Pieter de Hooghe. In France Chardin's genius gave it all possible suggestive depth, in those still-life pictures where every object reveals some silent life, in his intensely sweet and humble interiors which no one had painted before, and which will remain immortal models. But after Chardin we have to traverse the whole eighteenth century to



J. F. Millet.

RUSTIC SCENE

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find intimists capable of seeing in the painting of interiors anything but licentiousness. We have to come down to that exquisite twilight in which Prudhon envelops his figures, to that poetry of shades, the secret of which seems to have rested with him in his grave until the day when Gustave Ricard revealed himself. Ingres's classicism, preoccupied with line and conventional form, did not dream of expressing the inner meaning of beings and objects; and romanticism, preoccupied with fine gestures and violent catastrophes, did not think of it either. It is therefore among certain spirits who are neither classicist nor romanticist, akin rather to realism, but desirous of adding to it, that we shall find the true intimists of the nineteenth century, who are devoted to truth, but only that they may show how much finer and more subtle it is than the superficial truth with which the crowd is contented.

Intimism has, by preference, addressed itself to humble places. It is indeed the product of a democratic epoch; it has brought out the obscure and touching poetry of the people, of modern interiors, of the country, and the poetry of work and effort. This latter nobody has grasped and rendered more admirably than Jean-François Millet.

To him, first of all, must all honour be accorded. Millet was the intimist *par excellence*, in his life as well as in his work. Having appeared without making any stir as a realist, he turned to the study of rural life, buried himself in the country, lived in poverty and neglect, and died in a labourer's cottage, almost destitute and hardly appreciated save by some few noble spirits. Only after his death did fame come to him, almost impertinently, since it took a pecuniary and painfully ironical form, this great man's *Angelus* having been sold for £24,000 when his grave in the poorest corner of a village cemetery was hardly filled with earth! Millet had no more facilities in his art than in his life. There was nothing of the virtuoso in him; long and painfully he tried to find his road, evolved his personality, acquired by force of will and sincerity the qualities he lacked, and, above all, he loved profoundly and passionately the country and its rustic inhabitants. He lived in their midst, dressed like them, and understood their primitive grandeur, which he succeeded in translating in his art, sometimes with a rough concentration which perhaps can only be found in the famous passage of La Bruyère, or in some of Maxim Gorki's novels.

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Millet's work may be considered as a vast rustic poem, relating the life of the French peasant. It is solidly painted, generally in tawny, dull tones, without any particular pictorial charm, except in a few canvases, like the *Stormy Spring* at the Louvre, which has a harmony one would hardly expect in his work. A few heavy, hot tones and admirable, vigorous drawing suffice for Millet to be himself, and often his painting is more that of a draughtsman, of an etcher, than of a painter in the true sense of the word. His drawing itself has an entirely sculptural character. His aim is above all to express silhouettes, grand contrasts of light and shade, and to set them against backgrounds of ploughed fields, against skies that are generally gray and pale, and only rarely blue, of a trembling and undefined colour. Thus rises at dawn the figure of the *Man with the Hoe*, a tragic masterpiece, a veritable bronze, the parent of all the beautiful statuary of Constantin Meunier. Thus also appear the profiles of the *Sower* and the two figures in the *Angelus*. Millet nearly always places them in a field—that of Chailly, which stretches out near the village of Barbizon, where he lived. He paints neither woods, nor rivers, nor verdant nooks. He paints the soil itself, the rich and fallow, rough and fruitful earth, and the beings that live upon it are of the same roughness and the same colour.

He may be said to be the first, or at least the most powerful, of those who have expressed rustic people: he neither deforms nor beautifies them. He paints them just as they are. But upon their faces, hewn, so to speak, with an axe, he could conjure up some very general ideas which betray their whole half-animal, half-human soul: fatigue, simple faith, and resignation can be read on them. Their gestures are true and habitual. They never suggest that they are a pose. The *Gleaners* is an admirable work from this point of view, as regards simplicity and correctness. A realist would have turned them into frightful, broken, sordid, degraded creatures; an academic painter would have made shepherdesses of them: Millet has painted them as one sees them, in their work-a-day dress, beautiful in their harmony of movement. A great draughtsman, he has grasped the rhythmic relations of a landscape to the beings which move in it, and has thus quite naturally realized one of the aims of that impressionist movement in which he took no interest. Whenever he painted landscapes without figures, he was great, *c.g.*, in



J. F. Millet.

THE NEEDLEWOMEN.

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the *Stormy Spring* and the *Church* at the Louvre, which appears, old and exquisite, in a most delicate atmosphere. But it is above all in his intimate scenes that Millet has proved himself an emotional poet whose lofty view of truth is deeply fascinating. His farmyards, his dairy women working in bare and cold rooms, his old women gathering dead wood, and finally his mothers, who foretell Carrière's, are among the most serious and most beautiful productions of intimism. Nothing in them is mediocre, nothing is sacrificed to superfluous detail, everything is large, real, and poetical



MILLET
THE HAY-TRUSSERS

[Photograph—Giraudon]

through the scrupulous study of expression. All painters of peasants since this master have been below him—even the worthy artist Rosa Bonheur, even Lhermitte, who has painted some fine works, even Jules Breton, who has done so, too, even Alfred Roll, who knows and loves the sons and daughters of the soil and expresses them with great vigour. Millet alone held the secret of making their attitudes heroic, of enveloping them in penumbra, of suggesting in his canvases great devotion to the fertile soil. There is nothing literary about his expression. His work makes one think neither of George Sand's sentimental peasants, nor of Zola's brutes, nor of the poetized labourers of the rustic novel,

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

nor of the starved socialists one meets in certain contemporary books. In Millet's work we find a real being who, endowed with an obscure vitality, forms the foundation of the race and of society, whose soul is the emanation of the soil and whose organism is fashioned for periodical struggles with the ungrateful element which yields its treasures to force. Millet resembles no one but Millet, and his work appears at its full greatness, perhaps, when it is no longer seen, when it is a mere recollection. It seems inferior to many brilliant canvases; it does not possess the charm of rare colour, unexpected attitudes, and originality of arrangement, to hold one's eyes. Sober, severe in subject and treatment, it has nothing striking in its appeal. From afar, it remains in the soul, on which it imposes itself with the power of a melancholy and healthy emotion, and one is amazed at the magnetism it sets free. This magnetism is intimism itself; it is the faculty of evoking sentiments by means of a spectacle. A peasant or a hay-maker by Millet are poor wretches doomed to toil at some unknown farm: yet they have nothing anecdotal, they are representative of the vast labour that is carried on in silence at the foundation of human society. The author of "Silence and Secrecy," the great Carlyle, would have admired and loved them.

Around Millet there has collected a generation of rustic painters, some of whom have been excellent, notably Rosa Bonheur, Jules Dupré, Léon Lhermitte, Jules and Emile Breton, Auguste Boulard, a portrait painter and intimist of great merit, and Charles Jacque. But the one who will remain the most attractive of them all is no doubt J. C. Cazin. He was the great poet of moonlit nights. As painter and pastellist he succeeded in rendering the vibrating union of materiality and ideality. He was the suave painter of moonlight on the sea-shore, on the fishermen's houses in the north of France. Before Thaulow, before Harrison, he found the nacreous, pearly lights, the moving shadows, the indistinct distances, the enchanting unreality of clear nights, which are the glory of his work; he expressed them as a great artist, with almost musical tenderness. Cazin was a veritable master, perhaps the creator of the transition between Corot and the successors of impressionism, with a mournful grace which remains in some respects inimitable. He has been half sacrificed, in public opinion, to more brilliant and skilled artists, and it is only now that his entire merit is perceived and that he



Eugène Carrière.

MATERNITY.



E. Carrière.

MELANCHOLY.

THE INTIMISTS

is placed in his proper position. Close to him must be placed two forgotten painters who were both men of intense individuality: one of them is A. F. Cals, a serious painter of figures in penumbra, a matured intimist; the other, J. de Nittis, who had a great name in his time, a comrade of the impressionists, and, on certain points, their precursor; a Parisian enamoured of Paris and able to note its aspects and its lights with nervous elegance and with an intense accuracy of vision. Finally, with the name of J. de Nittis we must preserve also that of Ferdinand Heilbuth, of whom Ricard painted so simple a portrait, and who was a subtle intimist, a painter of convents, of silhouettes of women softened by the twilight, blending intimism with veiled tenderness.

Among the intimists should also be counted M. Dagnan-Bouveret, who first appeared as a realist, and who, thanks to his religious conviction, became more and more exalted in his conception of art, and attained to religious painting without losing his fundamental qualities. M. Dagnan-Bouveret has given proofs of a serious and conscientious talent, whether in painting the *Watering-Place*, the *Conscripts*, and the *Breton Women*, trying in his *Last Supper* and in his *Pilgrims at Emmaus* to touch upon the modernized representation of Christ, which had already been attempted by Herr v. Uhde and many other artists. There is a rare force of moral concentration in his painting, a magnetism of serious will, a mysticism without theatrical convention, really intimate and sprung from his soul. The same may also be said of the art of a man who was misjudged and has fallen into the most unjust oblivion, Tassaërt, the author of some small, touching scenes which are inspired by the most subtle emotion.

To Corot and Millet must be linked M. Auguste Pointelin, who has devoted his life to expressing the sombre and melancholy beauty of the Jura landscapes, his native soil. Like Corot he contents himself with a few tones and is not afraid of repeating them. He restricts himself to one harmony: a pearly sky with the dying flames of twilight, the outskirts of gloomy woods, and rough and obscure dells. But he treats it with an admirable poetic faculty and with indisputable mastery in the use of values. He knows how to suggest the silence and the cold wind in bare branches, the sweet sadness of plains, the indistinctness of horizons at the end of the day, and the glittering of a pool in which

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a bit of sky is reflected. At the Salons he is almost the only man to introduce to-day that special and exquisitely poignant note to which, through impressionism, we had ceased to be accustomed, and the very recent painters will rightly consider him as an initiator.

After giving a word of recognition to the painter-etcher Marcelin Desboutsin, who has engraved Fragonard in admirable fashion and has signed some beautiful contemporary portraits, I must pass on to a great painter, one of the greatest of the present day—Eugène Carrière.

Influenced at first by the Spaniards, then by Ver Meer and Chardin, Eugène Carrière has gradually devoted himself to the expression of a serious and deep humanity which he loves to envelop in mysteriously transparent shadows. He paints pictures of maternity and portraits. Formerly he used to colour them with exquisite delicacy and with a distinction of harmonies which comes very near to Whistler's. Now he confines himself to bistre, black and white to evoke these dream-figures, true images of souls, which make him inimitable in our epoch and go back to Rembrandt's chiaroscuro. I have already spoken of him in the chapter on portrait painters, for his likenesses of Daudet, Gabriel Séailles, Verlaine, the sculptor Devillez and Goncourt will take a place in French art. But Carrière's real greatness rests in his having created a pictorial atmosphere that was unknown before him, and on having gone further than Prudhon and Ricard in the expression of psychical magnetism. Carrière excels in distributing shadows and lights, in establishing strong values, in remaining energetically accentuated in the apparent fluidity of his canvases. He is an absolutely surprising painter of hands and glances; he charges them with complex thoughts and revelations and modern disquietude. He paints sad and precocious children, women of the people with grave and vigorous countenances; sorrowful and uneasy artists' faces that gleam forth through pale or golden shadows, and seem to be in a trance through excess of thought. The effect of this gloomy art is peculiar. It bears no resemblance to what is called "sooty painting," for it is full of the vibrations of a diffused and weakened light which can only be defined by the word "poetical," in the sense in which Edgar Allan Poe conceived it. Carrière does not appear to have been influenced by the art of his time. He is personal and stands alone; he cannot be compared. The further



J. de Nittis.

LA PLACE DES PYRAMIDES.



Hailuoh.

BY THE WATER.

THE INTIMISTS

he proceeds, the more he occupies himself with expressing human beings only through planes and volumes, suppressing colour as a transitory and superficial element. His intimate friendship with Rodin produces a curious interchange between these two great spirits. Rodin occupies himself more and more with amplifying the surfaces of his statues, so as to avoid the dryness of outlines cut into the air and to create between them and atmosphere a kind of radiant zone, like that which Carrière creates between his heads and his backgrounds. The painter, on the contrary, tries more and more to give his works a sculptural character, by means of broad planes and the unity of tone. Nothing is more unexpected than his faculty of uniting the most subtle gradations of shades with this broad and simplified drawing.

Carrière is a slow spirit, but sure, and endowed with intense comprehension. He has written some notes on art, very lofty both in style and matter. He is a man of the people, meditative and concentrated, delicate, but without elegance, learning little at a time, but never forgetting anything. Besides his portraits, his children, and his mothers, he has produced some very fine works, such as his decoration for the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, in which two melancholy women look upon Paris at nightfall; the *Cheap Theatre*, in which he has painted the amphitheatre crowd leaning over the luminous vacuity of the house; a *Christ on the Cross* of very original conception, some lithographs, curious in technique, and even a few strange and interesting landscapes. He has exercised great influence upon contemporary art, through his work as well as through his spirit. He has served as a rallying-point for all who wished to escape the dogmas of the School, without embarking upon realism or impressionism, and he has set the example of the truest intimism. He extracts, without the help of any fantastic effect, the sum of mystery inherent in every human being; beyond the flesh he makes one feel the soul, and he introduces into modern art a serious, touching, noble and tender vision which suffices for his fame. Some of his works approach absolute beauty.

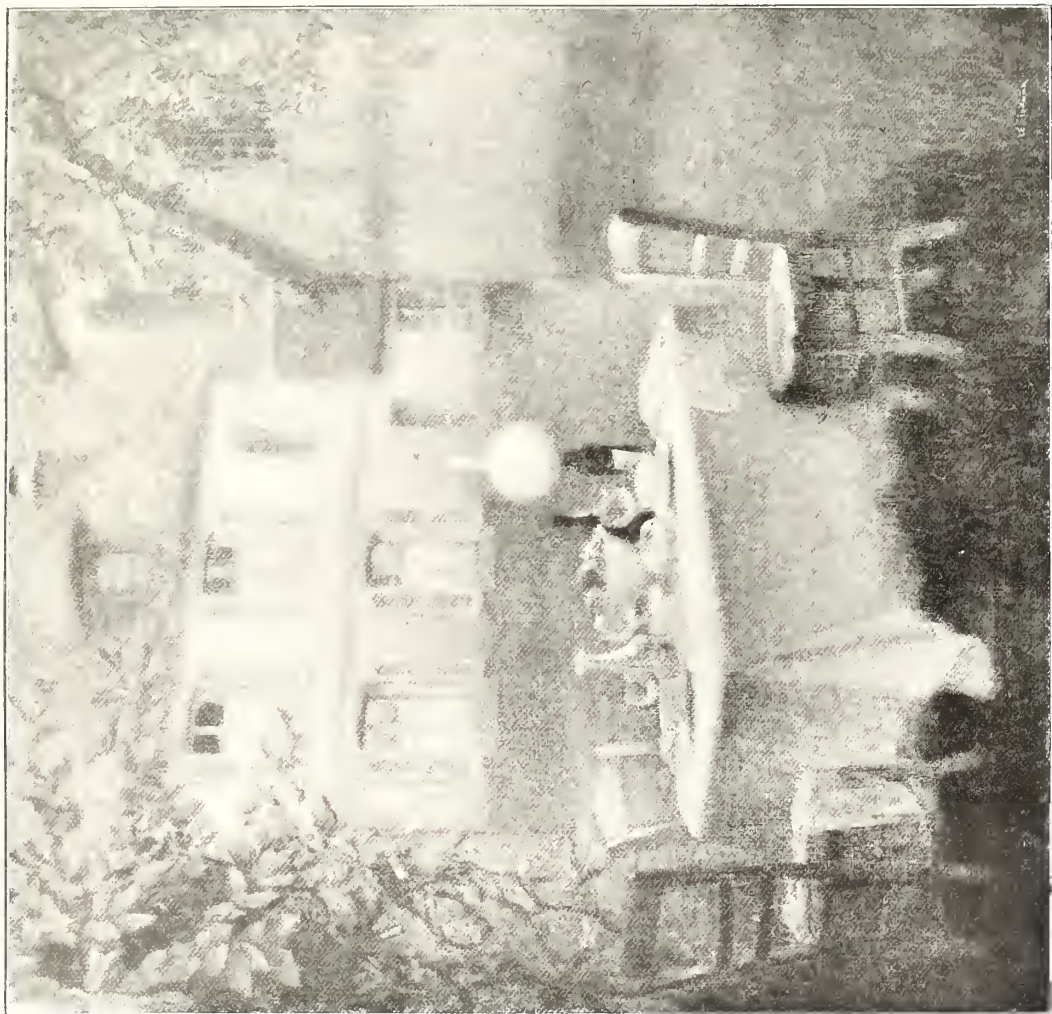
Under Carrière's influence, and with the intention of keeping at an equal distance from realism and academic art, a certain number of young painters have formed a group which has already, in ten years, acquired such importance that it may rightly be called the only homogeneous

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group at the contemporary French Salons. The present-day intimists are, as a matter of fact, excellent and thorough artists, who have profited by the lessons of impressionism, but have decided to lead their art back to less brilliant and less superficial regions. Among the best of them we must mention Henri Le Sidaner, Emile Wéry, Eugène Lomont, Georges and Lucien Griveau, Charles Cottet, Simon Bussy, Maurice Lobre, Armand Berton, Lucien Simon, René Ménard, René Prinnet and Edouard Vuillard.

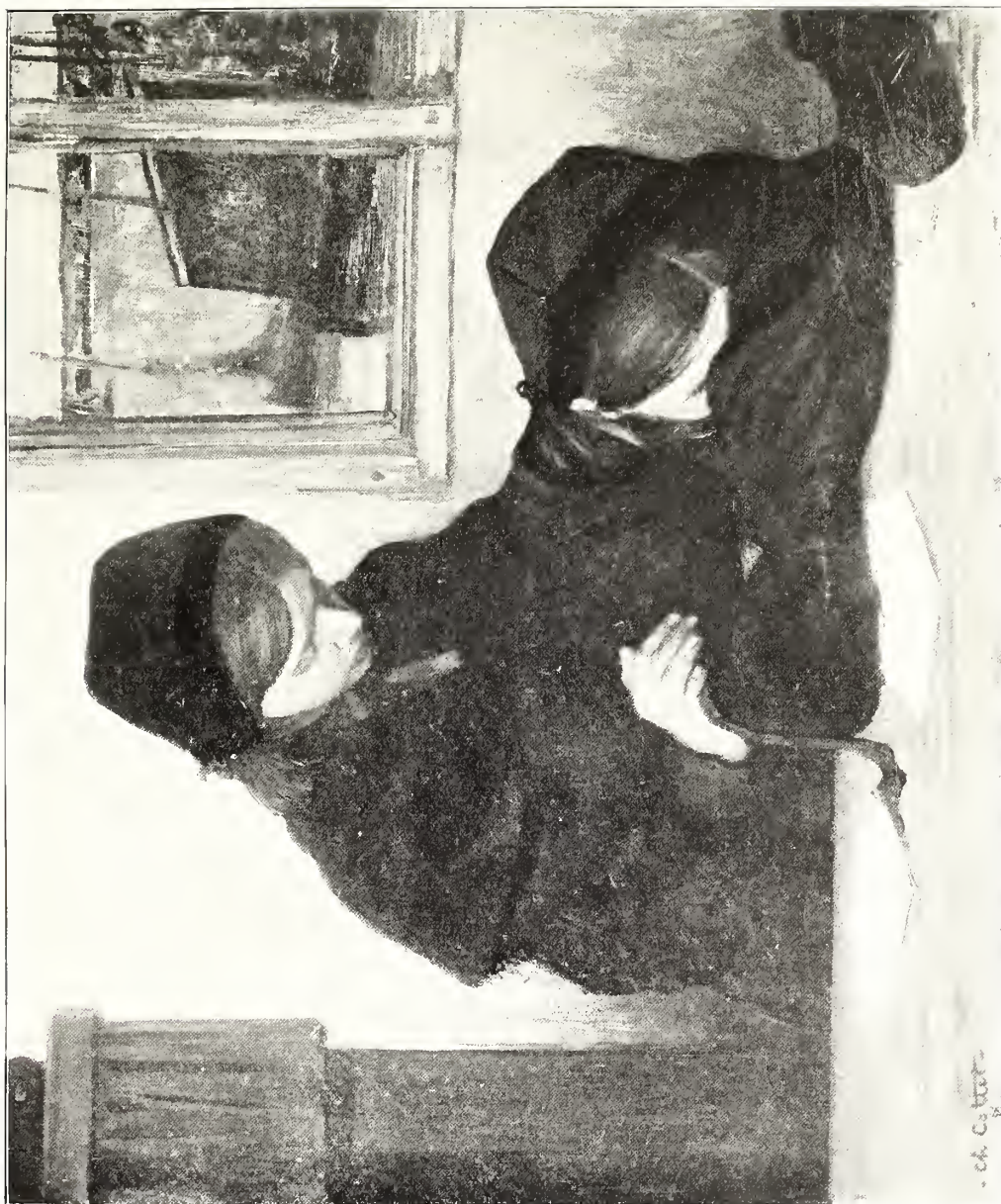
Henri Le Sidaner is, perhaps, the most interesting of them all, and the one of whom most may be expected. He has really a painter's greatest gifts, an original technique and delicious sensitiveness. He paints twilight scenes, moonshine on snow, calm and dead waters, old, shadowy houses, from which shines the feeble light of a lamp, young, white and pensive girls, deserted gardens sleeping in nocturnal peace; and on these themes, which he finds at Bruges, or in old French provincial towns, he composes veritable symphonies in shades of incredible subtlety, with a knowledge of harmonies that belongs rather to music than to painting. We might say that he sees Nature through the crystal of dream and silence, and at the same time he expresses the life of inanimate objects; he evokes the mystery of somnolent matter with the deep emotion of a great poet. The poetry in his work is so impressive that one cannot see at first the extreme mastery of the colourist, and the difficulties overcome, such as, for instance, the study of the light of a lamp struggling with the last reflections of daylight, or the investigation of the various colours of a bouquet lighted by the moon. Such works of his, as have appeared for some years at the Salons, have given birth to a reputation for M. Le Sidaner, which is growing into fame; they are the very standard of the degree of the incorporeal that can be expressed in a plastic art, and they sum up intimism in its entirety.

Eugène Lomont paints with distinction fine interiors, in which appear profiles of female musicians and faces of old women of a tender charm. Maurice Lobre has devoted himself to painting the deserted apartments of the *Château de Versailles*, and to suggesting in these empty halls, in these perspectives where some piece of furniture or crystal sparkles transiently, the recollections and figures of a sumptuous and tragic past. Armand Berton paints women with a smiling and tender



Henri Le Sidaner.

THE TABLE.



Ch. Collet.

BRETON MOURNERS.

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expression in a manner very analogous to Eugène Carrière's. Simon Bussy, who is beginning to make a considerable reputation for himself in England, is a finely gifted portrait painter and landscapist. Whether he paints the grand, bare and severe countrysides of central France, or describes in surpassing pastels the sparkling blue waters of the Provençal littoral, or evokes the Luxembourg gardens in all the delicacy of Parisian grays, or the melancholy aspects of the old Jura towns, or, finally, paints a few beautiful portraits, he is always attractive, rich and mysterious.



MILLET
GREVILLE CHURCH

[*Photograph—Neurdein Brothers*]

More pronouncedly impressionistic is Edouard Vuillard who is too modest and exhibits but rarely. He is a veritable small master, enamoured of Japanese art, who realizes with loving minuteness motley harmonies of exquisite delicacy, little pictures representing simple and fresh interiors with seamstresses, children and flowers, through which sometimes the recollection of the great Chardin passes like a faint perfume. Quite different is M. Louis Picard, who must be added to the group of intimists, owing to his recent works. A brilliant, sensual, bright virtuoso, he places against a background of illuminated gardens, or in strange atmospheres, tall, slender women of flower-like elegance, and of a poetry at

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once ardent and subdued. Finally, the names of three very important painters must be added to these artists. The first, who has already asserted himself by numerous works, is Edmond Aman-Jean, a very subtle feminist, a poet of sad sweetness, a designer of charming tapestries, and a very sure draughtsman and subtle colourist. The second is Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, who at the beginning of his career was under the influence of Gustave Moreau, and reveals himself now as a powerful realist and a learned and mature psychologist. The third and last is Ernest Laurent, who is responsible for some admirable portraits and some intimate scenes of fascinating tenderness.

Three more artists will close this all too short enumeration. They are united by friendship and by communion of thought and technique. One of them is Emile Wéry, who has signed some powerfully original seascapes and studies of common people. The other is Lucien Simon, who, in the short space of ten years, has gained for himself an important position in the art of the day by his beautiful portraits and his large series of Breton canvases, which are a little brutal, a little exclusive, in their psychology of the animalism of the people, but proudly prove their descent from Manet by their freedom of touch, their fire, their light, their strong and healthy presentation. The third is Charles Cottet, who is also devoted to the study of Brittany, to which so many living painters are addicted. Cottet's characteristic feature is the somewhat heavy power of his black manner. He has conceived Brittany as a country of misery, of obscurantism, of dismal storms; he loves to paint its green and yellow heath, its livid skies, its glaucous sea, the almost stony faces of its natives. But he has also seen certain sentiments that are beautiful through being primitive. Without painting, like Dagnan-Bouveret, the mysticalness of religious Brittany, he has been able to find a means of suggesting it with a sustained emotion which is quite his own. The triptych of the *Pays de la Mer*, now at the Luxembourg Gallery, is one of the most profoundly thoughtful works that have been painted in France during the last thirty years. Cottet's style directly recalls Courbet by the intentional massiveness of the broad, black planes, the warm tonality of the faces, and the severity of its composition.

What am I to say, finally, of René Ménard, who is only indirectly connected with the intimists? His landscapes denote an entirely classical



Simon Rossy

Simon Rossy

THE LAKES OF THE ENGADINE.



René Menard.

BY THE SEA

THE INTIMISTS

descent, from Poussin, Vernet and Claude Lorrain. They have the same golden tonality, the same feeling for decorative style, the same serene light, and the same ample and noble aspect. They conjure up the landscapes of the *Ile de France*, or the aspects of the Greek country, and their emerald meadows serve as a setting either for large herds, or for nymphs of beautiful form, whom one might imagine living in Arcadia in Virgilian times. The poetry of these works has little to do with contemporary preoccupations; it is nearer to the ideas of the English pre-Raphaelites than to impressionist ideas, but it is very clearly distinct from the false poetry of the Academy.

A group of this nature presented itself ten years ago at the Salons so firmly united that they produced the feeling that in them was to be found the future of the French School. And, as a matter of fact, it is to this group that we must look, with no fear of being mistaken, for the future direction of this School; to this group and to decorative art interpreting modern and scientific symbols, the example of which has been set by the admirably original work of Albert Besnard. There is no doubt that intimism is the expression of the preoccupations of the contemporary novel, transposed into painting. The analogies between a Le Sidaner or an Ernest Laurent, and the poetry of Verlaine or the music of Franck are obvious, and we might make a close comparison between Simon's and Cottet's canvases and Maupassant's stories: they would show the same sober and strong analysis, the same vigorous and learned notation of the expressions of rustics. Intimism is partly the outcome of Chardin, Millet, Prudhon, Courbet and Carrière, from whom it draws its sentiment; and partly of impressionism which it has to thank for its complete liberation from the School. It represents the national introduction of thought into an art which seemed to have forgotten it, either because it confined itself to realism pure and simple, or because it shut itself up in the fortress of mythological allegory. Intimism must not be confounded with the odious "*genre* picture" which heaps up bad painting round a more or less clever anecdote, and is intended to delight the ignorant part of the public who value pictures according to their subjects. The "subjects" of intimist painting are *interior*. They are suggestions, sentiments, interpretations of the soul of Nature, the emotions of man before some aspect of the universe, whether this aspect be a face worn

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by passion, an old house, a reflection in water, an evening sky, or a silhouette in moonlight. For a thinking person every object is a symbol, but a natural symbol, resulting from life itself at any moment, and without need of the help of any traditional allegory. It is this belief which guides nearly all the French intimists of the day, to the list of whom should be added two more subtle religious painters, Henri and Marie Duhem. It is this idea which enables them to liberate themselves from the specious distinctions between realism and idealism, and to prove that these two notions are as blurred in art as they are in life. In this sense intimism is a direct emanation of the most recent thought in ethics and in science, and it is this communion with its time that assures it a great future.



Lucien Simon.

PROCESSION.

CHAPTER IX

THE DECORATORS

Why decorative art has only been of very subordinate importance in the artistic pursuits of the century.—The weakness of religious painting.—Chassériau's frescoes.—Monticelli and his work.—Puvis de Chavannes, his simplified humanity, his idealism, his natural symbolism.—Besnard and scientific symbolism: the first symptoms of a future style in emblematic painting.—Jules Chéret and modern fantasy.—Some recent painters.

THE preceding chapters have set forth the evolution of the nineteenth century towards an art at the same time realistic and psychological. Two principal circumstances have to be considered for the better understanding of this "inner evolution" of an art which previous tendencies had inclined towards external, brilliant and decorative beauty. The first is the advent of modern democracy. Its influence partly undermined decorative art by deserting the palace and substituting for the conception of art as a luxury, reserved for a privileged minority, that of art, as a social possession, open to all. From the material point of view the lordly fancies, which had nourished the "grand" painting disappeared: the artist, having become a simple citizen, and even one of the poor, with little encouragement from the exacting and badly paying *bourgeoisie*, would no longer attempt vast compositions, and confined himself to the easel picture, and therefore more to a concentrated than to an expansive art. It must be observed that decorative painting has been honoured in countries like Italy, where the light is strong, where the climate is mild, where mural compositions are made to be admired in the open air, without deteriorating under its action for a long time; whilst painting of restricted dimensions has been the natural form adopted by races with a cold and rainy climate, in Germany and in Holland, wherever bad weather engenders the taste for staying at home in small dwellings, and where a fresh little picture may easily contain a little of the grace of Spring. And so it has been with the nineteenth century, though for very different reasons; it has been shut up in itself; it has been subjected to the strong influence of the North, and in its

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levelling spirit it has created sobriety of costume, the melancholy concentration of the soul and transcendental painting.

The second reason, the second fact, which comes to reinforce the first, is the immense development of music and its influence on modern life. The orchestra has rapidly grown into a kind of incorporeal fresco, and has played an analogous part. The fresco of the Italian porticoes was a kind of public instruction, and an object of pride for the people who visited it daily: it represented a living image of the fertility of the fatherland, as well as a lesson in beauty; it was a kind of collective language. The symphony has created in the democracy a similar religious spirit and communion; and the concert is one of the latest means of the union of souls. It has become a modern version of the ancient *agora*. And classical and romantic symphony, from Beethoven to Berlioz, has invented a new world of emotions and landscapes, renounced by painting, with that wonderful psychologic power which sums up in a few seconds all the feelings inspired by the slow contemplation of a mural painting. Music is not only an art; it is also the synthesis of the rhythms of all arts. In the course of this book I have repeatedly indicated its influence upon recent painters who are losing themselves in it more and more: from the outset it had asserted its character of democratic art, art for the masses, of universal magnetism, taking the place of art reserved for the select few.

These reasons would gain in importance by being developed. Their indication must suffice to show how far the decorative art of the nineteenth century has been only a reminiscence of the past, a rather rare expression of the desire to do great things in an epoch when all artistic and ethical conditions made for works on a restricted scale. Mural art during the nineteenth century has been a kind of protest in favour of the past rather than a spontaneous creation. We must come down to the last few years to see any genuine efforts after decoration that shall respond to contemporary ideas. There was a re-awakening of the decorative sense on the day when democracy accepted, established, fortified with actual experience and with a scientific conviction that supplanted all theocracies, thought of glorifying its edifices by inscribing them with symbols exempt from the spirit of the past, symbols born of its new creeds or recollections of its still pulsing history. That day the decorative sense became again what it should always have been: the spon-



Adolphe Monticelli.

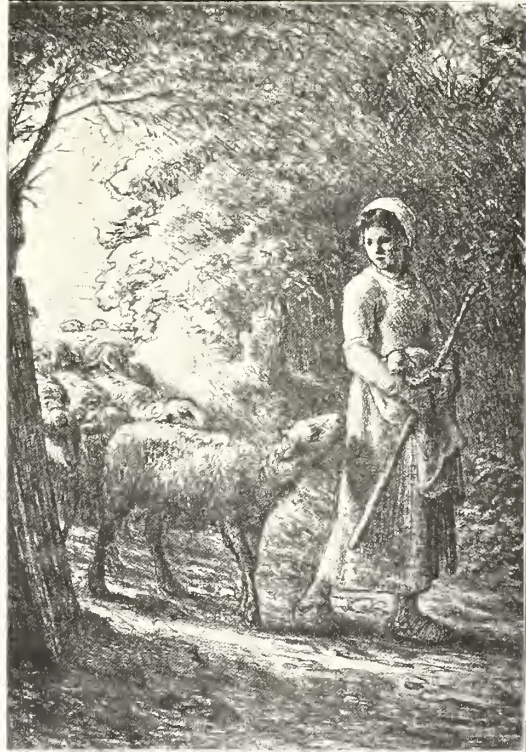
ALLEGORICAL SCENE.

Delpiano Collection, Cannes.

THE DECORATORS

taneous, natural expression of the style of a society, and we shall see that the credit for such a renaissance is due before anyone else to Albert Besnard, who has opened up a spacious road towards the future. Before him, decorative art, pictorially, was inspired only by the wish to attempt works that should combine all the difficulties inherent in vast compositions. It was, except for Puvis de Chavannes, a mere exercise of virtuosity: that, at least, is true of the majority of the compositions of this kind that have been attempted during this century.

Religious painting, in particular, cannot produce a single really great name. Ingres's pupils occupied themselves with it. With the exception of Amanry Duval, to whom we owe some noble church paintings, none of them has risen above mediocrity. Nothing better can be said, with the best intention, of the redundant and insipid work of the brothers Paul and Hippolyte Flandrin, nor of Tony Robert Fleury's; that of Olivier Merson and of his son Luc-Olivier has more merit; it tries to be documentary and archaically ingenious, but has no real personal style. We must come to the com-



MILLET
THE NEW-BORN LAMB

[Photograph—Giraudon]

positions of an unknown man, Paul Borel, to find a great talent and a soul badly served by very poor technical means, but enlightened and sustained by ardent mysticism. Once more it needed M. Huysmans to discover Borel in one of his famous novels, "En Route," to make his existence known outside the small group of amateurs of painting. Chenavard, of Lyons, a pupil of Ingres, was one of those who practise an art for which they have no aptitude. He was highly intelligent, and

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had fine ideas and noble aspirations, but he only produced gray and laborious paintings, in which the besetting recollection of the masters of the Renaissance clashes with the impossibility of an original vision. In fact, if we think of the wonderful masterpieces that mysticism inspired in preceding centuries, we cannot take any account of its stammerings during the nineteenth century, nor during the eighteenth, nor even during the seventeenth, when the lack of religious sentiment was redeemed by brilliant pictorial qualities. What can be said even of Ingres's *Virgè à l'hostie* and of his *Joan of Arc*, except that they unfortunately deserve to have been popularized by the ecclesiastical booksellers, and that they are two mistakes committed by the great physiognomist? The *Virgin*, in particular, so poor an imitation of Raphael, is the very model of an artist's inability to simulate thoughts which he does not feel. In this lies the strength and the originality of the nineteenth century. Almost the only recent religious paintings that deserve serious consideration are M. Dagnan-Bouveret's sincere and distinguished efforts, which approach the idea of a modernized Christ, as Herr Fritz von Uhde has conceived it; but these again have nothing decorative about them.

Delacroix, who touched upon every *genre* with the authority of genius, showed his decorative power in nearly all his pictures, and especially in his marvellous *Crusaders*, the work of a modern Paolo Veronese.¹ The ceiling of the Apollo Gallery at the Louvre is a work of the first order, but it is rather a decorative picture than a true decoration. In romanticism we can find no one who has set the example of decoration; for romanticism very quickly turned towards realism expressed in a concentrated form by the easel picture. One of the noblest decorative works of the century belongs, as a matter of fact, to the period of Ingres's influence; it is the decoration at the Cour des Comptes by Théodore Chassériau, who painted it at the age of twenty-five, before he had turned towards orientalism under the influence of Delacroix.

The decoration has disappeared. The conflagration during the Commune had scarcely touched it, but the inclemencies of the weather slowly destroyed it during the twenty-eight years for which the Cour des Comptes was a grand and sinister ruin, before being levelled with the

¹ Mention should be made here also of his admirable *Jacob wrestling with the Angel* and the *Punishment of Heliiodorus*, at the Church of St. Sulpice, in Paris.



Théodore Chassériau.

"PEACE": Decoration for the Cour des Comptes.

THE DECORATORS

ground to make room for a railway station. Except for a few fragments which they succeeded in detaching from the walls, nothing remains but photographs, the original sketches, and a memory. It was a grand and superb piece of work, the outcome at the same time of the antique and of Ingres. Puvis de Chavannes' work shows unmistakable traces of its influence and it was certainly an initiation for him. *Peace* and *War* were the themes of these frescoes which decorated the double turn of a central staircase, at the top of which were throned the two giant figures representing Force and Wisdom, whose gestures seemed to point to right and left at the series of scenes born of their thoughts. The composition of these frescoes was of the greatest dignity. Executed partly in *grisaille* and almost imitating the relief of statuary in the darker passages, and partly coloured in powerful values, they presented striking and majestic grouping, figures at once classical and passionate in style, bold invention, and above all a harmonious rhythm of lines and planes, that must make the baleful disappearance of such a work deplored as an irreparable loss. It enables us at least, on the strength of the remaining designs, to place Chassériau among the first painters of his century and among the greatest French decorators. This prodigy of youthful genius had the finest gifts that his calling can offer—fertility, free mastery, inspiration served by a rich and supple technique, and a mind capable of synthesis and depth without detracting from the outward character of decorative art.

Before dealing with Puvis de Chavannes, it will only be just to speak of Monticelli. Although he has only produced small pictures, he still belongs to the decorators, or, if we prefer it, to the lyricists, so elusive is his capricious genius to critical analysis; and his little pictures may be considered as minute decorations. They have their essential characteristics and might be enlarged a hundredfold without changing their qualities. Monticelli led the most lamentable life. He was born at Marseilles, and having exhibited at the Salons, where he was noticed by Gautier and some few critics, he returned to his native town about 1870, never to leave it again. He lived there unappreciated, in such poverty that he had to go round the cafés to sell small masterpieces for ten francs, disposing of them only with difficulty even at that price, and died, half mad, in destitution. He was ignored for a long time;

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many of his small works were sold under the name of Diaz, and when the advent of impressionism made it clear that this supposed lunatic had been a great precursor, his canvases began to be searched for and even forged. They reached such high prices, that in some instances picture dealers who possessed sketches by Diaz, sold them under the name of Monticelli. His best-known work is a series of *fêtes galantes* in the spirit of Watteau; but Provençal collectors know also of a series of seascapes, of farmyards, landscapes, still life and flowers of extraordinary beauty. It is very difficult to define Monticelli's art,—not less difficult than to give an idea of it by means of photography or engraving, and the work here reproduced as “documentary evidence” is a work in the artist's first manner, painted in a sleek technique and with definite drawing. The technique of his really original works is so peculiar, that, owing to the enormous overloading of the canvas with paint and owing to the infinite gradations, no engraving of them can be anything but meaningless. His art recalls Claude Lorrain a little, and Watteau even more, by its sentiment, and Turner or Bonington by its colour and the goldsmith-work—no other term can be used—which the artist practises upon his medium. Certain pictures by Turner, notably his *Ulysses and Polyphemus* and the *Funeral of Germanicus*, give a sufficiently approximate idea of Monticelli's colour, and the same may be said of Watteau's *Embarkment for Cythera* and *The Indifferent*. His work has the same subtlety of gradations, the same division into fragments of tones, the same variety of execution, which has sometimes the opaqueness of china and of enamel, and sometimes the translucence of precious stones or the brilliancy of glass, metal, or oxides and seems to be the result of some mysterious chemistry. But Monticelli goes further still on this road, which equally tempted Ricard, Gustave Moreau, and sometimes Degas. So thick is the massing of colours, that his pictures are veritable bas-reliefs, and the most astonishing fact is, that these works which it is impossible to copy, and which seem the result of poring labour, were improvised in a few hours with the decision and the impulsive force of genius. The artist, who used no brushes, squeezed the colour tubes straight on to the canvas and scratched the strange incrustations into them with palette-knife or finger-nail. A painting of his once seen can never be forgotten nor confused with another.



Puits de Chavannes.

THE CHILD ST. GENEVIÈVE AT PRAYER.

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Monticelli had an absolutely unique perception of tonalities, and his glance took in certain shades which had not been observed before and which the optic and chromatic science of the day has placed either by proof or hypothesis, between the principal tones of the solar spectrum, thirty years after Monticelli had fixed them. There is magic and high lyric poetry in his art.

Sketched and indicated by a few beautiful touches, which are placed with marvellous sureness under their apparent carelessness, Monticelli's female figures have, in their state robes, in the setting of statues, pieces of water, bowers and swans, in which they disport themselves, a pliant and ingenuous grace which is quite personal to the painter. Careful examination shows that nothing could be modified in these apparently rough sketches. The essential themes of this artist are *fêtes*, the "Decameron," lovers' meetings in gardens, and other love scenes, and the rugged or vaporous aspects of his beloved Provence. There is no doubt that if Monticelli had been understood and put in a position to execute decorations, he would have created masterpieces in this branch of art, worthy of the greatest masters. All his work sums up the genius of decoration; you feel that his aspirations were essentially decorative. Even the jeweller's work of his technique is only a reduction of values which, on a larger scale, would have no minuteness and would blossom forth triumphantly. His pictures are decorations compressed for want of space. It is no exaggeration to say that if some day an exhibition of Monticelli's works could be held, a single day would suffice to accord his memory a renown greater than all the sum of injustice and neglect it has experienced; it would be an amazing revelation and a red-letter day in the history of the colourists of all ages. "I am painting for thirty years hence," said Monticelli in 1870. And, as a matter of fact, it is only to-day that he is beginning to appear as a genius connecting the beautiful tradition of the eighteenth century with impressionism, possessing, as he does, the grace of the one and the technical originality of the other, and blending them in an absolutely personal manner as a real precursor.

Puvis de Chavannes's work is majestically spread over the whole second half of the nineteenth century. Its character is at once classical and innovative, and in the sphere of decorative art it is beyond comparison with any other work of the French School.

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Puvis de Chavannes was an aristocrat and a mystic, deeply attached to classic poetry and French soil. His was not a very subtle spirit, but capable of wide general ideas and simplifications. His nerves were not sensitive: strong in body and soul, he produced with regularity and calmness according to a harmonious ideal which remained foreign to all the feverish evolution of contemporary painting. In sympathy with impressionism and in general with any innovation, so far as to be able to preside with the most praiseworthy liberalism over the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts*, Puvis de Chavannes did not allow anything to divert or trouble him when he had found the formula which he believed to be in harmony with his nature. Before being a painter he was an ideologist who used painting as a means of expressing himself; and, like all artists thus constituted, he was, above all, a draughtsman. His ideology consisted in a series of symbols drawn from Nature and expressed with effective clearness and with a poetic feeling exempt from simulation.

As a colourist, Puvis de Chavannes was above all a harmonist. With him the charm of colour never took precedence over drawing, the central idea, and the investigation of character. He had a harmonious scheme composed of three or four tones which he played upon, like a classic symphonist, with the grace and delicacy of a Haydn. But he ignored, or rather relegated to the second place, the passionate love of colour, of precious paint, and all the sensuality of his art. He was idealist and symbolist; but his symbolism always depended upon the observation of life and truth of drawing, and he may be said to have been a very scrupulous and convinced realist with the greatest possible dislike for the deformation of natural aspects, for hieratism and the fantastic element. He had but little love for, or comprehension of, modern poetry and of all that has been called the decadent school, although he never spoke ill of it. He confined himself to Virgil and Lamartine, to whom he bears so striking a resemblance. His cult of classicism was in no way narrow. Although he admired Ingres, he admired Degas and Besnard no less, and in all his work he has proved his antipathy to the prejudices of the Academy, which, by the way, detested him. It is this well-balanced independence, this love of natural classicism, this faculty of seeing broad general effects, this facility in finding the simplest ex-



Prieis de Charvannes.

CHILDHOOD OF ST. GENEVIEVE.

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pression for general ideas, that have constituted the noble, decorative genius of Puvis de Chavannes.

This genius he strengthened by incessant work during forty years. His output was enormous. It comprises principally the *Life of Saint Geneviève*, at the Pantheon; *Summer* and *Winter*, at the Hôtel de Ville; the decorations for the amphitheatre of the Sorbonne in Paris; the decorations at Rouen (*Inter Artes et Naturam*); at Lyons (*The Sacred Wood, Vision Antique, the Rhone, the Saône*); the decorations at Amiens (*Work, etc.*), *Marseilles, Porte de l'Orient*, and *Marseilles, the Greek Colony*, at the Marseilles Museum; the decoration at the Boston Library; a number of pictures and pastels, *Christian Inspiration* (one of his finest works), the *Poor Sinner*, and the immense number of his drawings and cartoons. It is a veritable world of beings that have sprung from a personal vision and a personal psychology.

Man and woman, as conceived by Puvis de Chavannes, are not exactly pagan, nor religious. They share Hellenist thought and biblical thought and are yet seen by a modern spirit.

His man is strong, with a simple face, without ideality and without baseness; his woman is tall, regular, desirable, but free from any nervous expression; her beauty is healthy and robust; she is a mother. His youths and maidens have a grace which carries no affectation in its train. Their nudités are harmoniously draped, but without imitation of the Greeks, and the garments vary with the professions and efforts. Their gestures have no other beauty than that which results from mus-

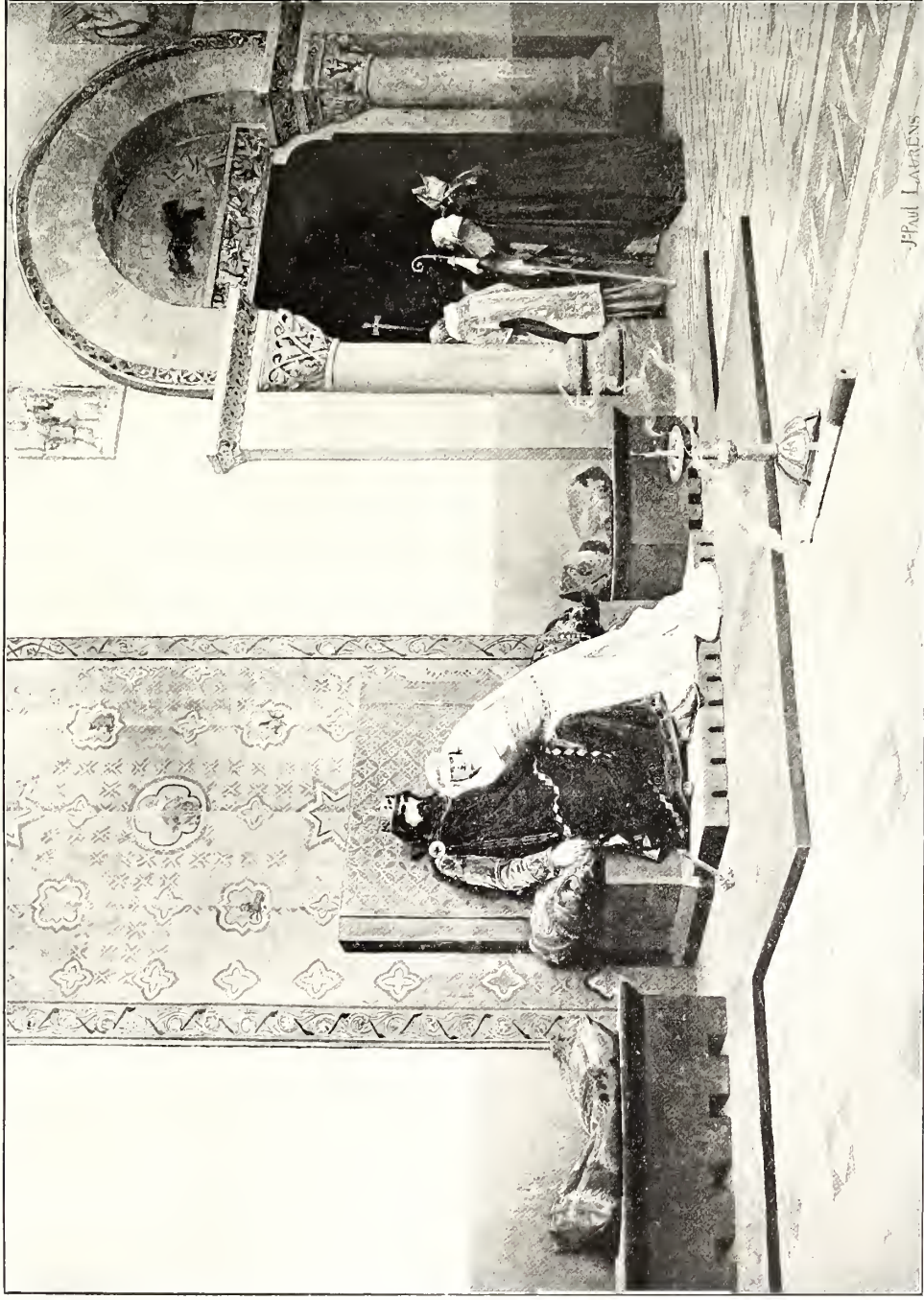


MILLET
THE CHURNER
[Photograph—Neurdein Brothers]

THE GREAT FRENCH PAINTERS

cular harmony itself, whether in action or repose. They are Virgilian labourers or shepherds of the Bible, but without ethnological definition. This race of men is above all ruled by work, which keeps up their strength without overwhelming or deforming them. They move about in spacious landscapes which are at once real and decoratively composed, and these landscapes are neither Greek, nor Northern, nor Italian. Puvis de Chavannes, who has so often been called a Hellenist, for want of another word to define his serenity (just as though serenity were only to be found with the Greeks), simply drew his landscapes from the surroundings of Paris. The slightest tree or the slightest hill in his work reveals attentive study of Nature, but he recomposed everything, just as he conventionalized his blacksmiths, his labourers, his vintagers, or his spinners. Thus, following an inner dream, the dream of a mystic pagan, he has arrived at suppressing the character of relativeness in his work, at being an idealist, without cutting himself adrift from truth, a realist without copying anything. He has indeed created a pictorial humanity, intelligible to everybody, indulging only in familiar, useful and logical gestures, uniting the permanent characteristics of humanity and synthesizing them by attitudes which the artist can admire and which the workman can understand. This is the very mission of decorative art, and no spirit, no talent, have perhaps ever been better employed at this art. Puvis de Chavannes has succeeded in presenting grand and vital scenes without any accessory symbol, with landscapes, nude or draped beings, a few weapons or instruments, and hardly ever any allegorical figures. He has thus reduced to a minimum the excuses for the future misunderstanding of his work: independent of every epoch it is a language accessible to everybody.

His mural decorations (which are not frescoes, but applied canvases) are admirably appropriate to the buildings and their interior light. All the colouring is purposely transposed into a high scale, so as to retain the greatest possible amount of light. Painters generally execute for public edifices pictures which, painted in the harmonies of broad daylight, and with true values, become too dark in a church or a palace and can only be seen by borrowing the light from the building. Puvis de Chavannes's decorations are, on the contrary, like windows opened upon the life without, on the other side of the stones; instead of artifici-



Paul LARRENS

THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF ROBERT THE GOOD.

Laurens.



J. Paul Laurens.

DEATH OF ST. GENEVIEVE

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ally conjuring up the spectacles of the outer world, they extend the inner space. "You do not feel shut in in a place where there are any of his paintings," said a great painter; and this impression is confirmed, for instance, at the Pantheon in Paris, where divers paintings may be found, not only indifferent works, like those by Bonnat and Cabanel, but also remarkable efforts, like Jean Paul Laurens's, which have really great qualities. Among all these the *Life of Saint Geneviève* is the most striking instance of the true decorative sense. Nothing can be seen next to it, not only because of its sublime qualities, its sweetness, pure style, mystical emotion, and gracious simplicity, but also because of the absolute logic of its distribution of diffused lights, adapted to the mauve and rose reflections of stone lighted by the vertical rays falling through the cupolas. The poetry of the artist's inspiration is here supported by the most intelligent knowledge of the immutable laws of mural painting.

Puvis de Chavannes' landscapes will count among the most beautiful works of the nineteenth century. Especially striking are those which serve as backgrounds to the two decorations at the Marseilles Museum. In them may be found the whole glowing, blue and golden vision of the warm skies and of the triumphant Mediterranean, as boldly expressed as in Claude Monet's seascapes; and the panorama of Rouen which is unfolded behind the figures in the *Inter Artes et Naturam* is incomparable in breadth. The *Summer* and *Winter* are scenes of admirable arrangement, so, too, is the *Vision Antique*. As regards the most idealistic of all Puvis de Chavannes' works, *The Sacred Wood*, it is truly what its title indicates. It transports the beholder into the noblest regions of aesthetic illusion, and the relations of harmony between the figures and the landscape are the most perfect achievements that could be conceived in decorative art.

Puvis de Chavannes' drawings sometimes seem incomplete at first sight. They are awkward and naïve and summary, and indicate general movements with a carelessness that cannot be found in the drawings of far inferior painters. But it should not be forgotten, that they are the drawings of a decorator, and after careful reflection, one can only feel astonished to see how well they express the silhouette of the figures, how thoroughly they reveal the preparation for the grand, final com-

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positions which will secure for Puvis de Chavannes one of the most unassailable positions among the painters of the French School. He had the good fortune—well deserved in every respect—to realize a homogeneous life's work and to die only after its complete achievement, before old age could betray his powers and lessen his genius. He has inscribed upon the walls of several great national cities a kind of epopee of work, of peace, and of fecundity, which will remain almost the only example in France of that which was the glory of the great Italians. And this he has done by detaching himself from the ideas of his century, without combating them, simply by obeying the commands of his individual ideas which were nevertheless not turned towards the past, but placed outside any specified epoch—general, simplified and serene. In this respect his work is a silent but powerful argument against scholastic routine. He even succeeded in expressing absolutely modern symbols and in forecasting a new style, suitable for our time. This is testified by a curious panel of the decoration for the Boston Library: *Electricity carrying Good and Bad News*. Along two telegraph wires that cross the canvas, on a background of sky, there slide in opposite directions two women. One, dressed in black, hides her face under her folded arm; the other, dressed in white, smiles whilst offering a bouquet, and both of them are swept giddily away in two contrary movements. It is impossible to imagine what ingenuity the artist required to arrange this composition without falling into the ridiculous; he has attained extreme emotion in extreme sobriety, thanks to his innate intuition of the way to adapt any idea to decoration.

This work will serve us as a transition to Albert Besnard's, who has splendidly developed what Puvis de Chavannes towards the end of his life had indicated in this panel at the Boston Library. In the preceding chapter I sketched the genesis of this astounding spirit. His decorative work is the expression of his intellectuality, just as his easel pictures express at the same time his sensuality as virtuoso and his instinct for anything fantastic. The former will perhaps remain superior to the latter, because it sets aside its sparkling but unequal allurements only to gain in power. It is the very expression of contemporary thoughts, which sometimes it even forestalls; it inaugurates a new era; it is of value not only in itself, but in all the promise it contains, in all



A. Besnard.

WOMAN WARMING HERSELF.

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that it unveils of a road which nobody had thought of taking, or, at any rate, had dared to take.

M. Albert Besnard is unquestionably a great painter; but he is also a profound spirit, a well-informed and clear intelligence, deeply interested in science and letters, a firm believer in evolutionist ideas, and one who foresees in the scientific ideal the elements of a new beauty and of a new symbolism. Accustomed to thought to a degree that but too few painters care to reach, he has tried to pour new blood into his art, to restore to it that ideological activity which realism and impressionism had relegated to a secondary place. He has had the courage to face science and ethics impartially, without troubling himself about "art for art's sake" or the formulas of the School that limit and monopolize the beautiful; he has had faith in his time; he has rejected the idea that there could be ugliness where there is character and life. But if he had confined himself to these sociological ideas he would not have been a painter: all they did was to direct and control his instinct. In him was to be found, after the advent of impressionism and at a moment when subjects seemed to be lacking to its art, a system of decorative ideas, which had been unknown hitherto.

The decoration for the School of Pharmacy, that for the *Mairie* of the first *arrondissement*, that for the ceiling of the *Salle des Sciences* at the Hôtel de Ville, that for the chemical amphitheatre at the Sorbonne in Paris, and finally that for the chapel of a hospital at Berck,



MILLET
THE FARM GIRL

[Photograph—Giraudon]

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form a standard, and mark the first decided step in the future style of mural painting.

The *Mairie* of the first *arrondissement* is decorated with three compositions: *The Morning*, *The Noon*, and *The Evening of Life*, all striking in colour and natural in symbolism. *The Evening*, in particular, is a poem of exquisite melancholy and grave intimacy; yet it only marks the starting-point of an artist who is trying to find his way. The School of Pharmacy is really the revelation of Besnard's modern and scientific thought. Five large compositions, to which four more have recently been added, tell, on one side, of *Illness* and *Convalescence*. *Illness* in particular is a masterpiece of expressive and tragic emotion. On another side may be seen the *Gathering of Herbs*, the *Laboratory* and the *Drying of the Flowers*, three smiling windows opened upon health and light. The recent additions represent the *Botanical Excursion* of the pupils and masters herborizing in the woods, the *Chemistry Lesson* and the *Pharmacy Lesson*, in which the silhouette of the man of science stands erect in the clear, cold light of the amphitheatre. All this is sober, varied, new in arrangement, decorative with elements of truth, modern costumes, serious and young faces, and a perfect feeling of appropriateness for the surroundings. These compositions, thrown on to the canvas with masterly facility, are conceived in very fine tonalities which catch the light of the vestibule in which they are placed. Between them are inserted compositions much smaller in size, but also of a strange poetry. They depict the first geological states and the first fauna of the world: mammoths, lighted by a red sun, are crossing a lake; plesiosaurs rise from the floods; wild horses gallop along the sands or the shore of an extraordinary sea; the mountains put on a crown of clouds and seem to be overthrown by the chaos; there is a river lined with gigantic lianas and flowers that are since extinct. At one end of the series is the lake-dweller with his wild face, a crouching anthropoid gnawing at the fragment of some animal he has killed. At the other end, modern man, with a weary and beautiful face, seated at the window of a lighthouse. His hands, that were holding a book, hang down in melancholy; he looks out upon the night that falls upon a vast landscape, a strait, a seaside town veiled in a bluish mist which is pierced by signal-lights, and in which can be distinguished a railway



A. Bidaud. APOTHEOSIS OF SCIENCE. Ceiling at the Hotel de Ville, Paris.

THE DECORATORS

station, docks, steamers and a peninsula already submerged in darkness. And these two visions of the human being, from the brute to the man of science, close in with strange symbolic power the evolution of the fauna and flora by the side of the grand compositions which tell of illness and its cure. Thus medical science, pharmacy, geology, the manipulation of plants, subjects which a painter would fifty years ago have declared to be "low," or, at the very least, not fit to be used, become elements of an expressive beauty.

The ceiling of the *Salle des Sciences*, at the Hôtel de Ville, is in conformity with the subject set by the official programme: *Science spreads light over the universe*. But here, where an academic painter would not have failed to group some draped figures as trite as the title of the subject, the artist, by an intuition of lyric genius, has overthrown all conventional art. He has painted the nocturnal azure as background, and upon it has lighted up fiery stars, comets and nebulae; the moon, as she is shown by astronomical photographs, occupies a whole panel of the composition, with her mountains, volcanoes and livid and icy plains. From the background of the ether, from the edge of the planets in the making, semi-human and semi-fantastic beings arise, and are whirled away in elliptical movement, led by a nude, haggard goddess who throws an armful of sheaves of flames into the waste, and who is a flame herself through all the radiation of her gold-coloured skin. They advance towards the brink of the gulf and fall into the void, escorted by figures of pure line, the Sciences that lead them towards the Ideal. Never has the whirl of knowledge, the intoxication with cosmic mystery, been expressed with such prodigious force as in this ceiling, with its violent blue and orange harmony which really pierces the roof of the hall and incloses a bold thought in an essentially decorative work. This elliptical and whirling course across the plurality of the worlds is a dream of surprising lyricism, at once natural and strange.

The decoration for the chemical amphitheatre at the Sorbonne is even more expressive. *Life reborn of Death* is its subject, which synthesizes well the part played by organic chemistry. In the centre of a brilliant mass of herbs and flowers, which is made to ferment by the flaming sun, lies the corpse of a tall woman. She has just died: a sturdy, naked baby is still clinging to her bosom. But already round

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about her imminent decomposition is announced by thousands of winged insects which swarm in the light. Among the flowers crawls the serpent, the symbol of the eternal recommencement. To the right and left, separated from the central subject by masses of foliage, two scenes are painted: on the right the child, grown into a man, descends, offering his hand to a young woman, towards a vast river which flows away into a vernal landscape. The river winds back, loses itself behind the central subject, and appears again to the left: this time it is the subterranean Styx, lit by gloomy red lights, in which can be discerned a world of beings convulsed in agony or in death, future rotten matter to be fertilized by the central sun, so that new living creatures may be born from it. The whole composition is thus carried along in a grand circular rhythm. By a subtlety which indicates Besnard's pictorial sense, the scale of colours becomes more and more bright and acid towards the lower part of the panel, in order that the tones may harmonize with those of the chemical substances inclosed in bottles and placed upon the professor's table which leans against the painting; the result being that these substances seem to be the coloured themes from which the whole decoration is evolved. Thus this work is directly inspired by chemistry and transformism; it takes up anew certain symbols, the Styx, Adam and Eve, the eternal river, the serpent, but it remoulds them in an unexpected synthesis which is the absolute example of what can be achieved by an exalted idea united with pictorial traditions.

Equivalents of this lyrical thought inspired by science, may be found in Edgar Allan Poe, in the novels of H. G. Wells, Rosny, and Paul Adam. Besnard is the first to transpose it into painting. We are forced, therefore, to consider his decorations as forecasts of the future, quite apart from their innate pictorial value.

It recently befell the artist to see his youngest son attacked by an illness which was considered incurable; he was cured at Berck, in the peculiar atmosphere of this Northern seashore. Four years of grief produced an evolution in the artist's spirit. In his gratitude for this cure he offered to the humble chapel of a hospital at Berck an important decoration, comprising a series of twelve compositions, the stations of the Cross, and an altar decoration, which were completed by a few statues of saints from the chisel of Madame Besnard, who is one of the finest



A. Bissland.

DEATH.

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sculptors of the present generation. This decoration is conceived in the spirit of Tolstoi. It connects the Saviour with all the actions of human life. Whether He be present at some operation, among the doctors and nurses, or distributing alms, or guiding people towards a luminous ideal city, He intervenes in contemporary life like the image of divine pity rather than like that of a God of orthodoxy. He is presented among laymen, without a priest, with a free faith which takes no care for theology, and denies none of the scientific spirit – the faith which Louis



MILLET
THE GLEANERS

[*Photograph—Neurdein Brothers*]

Pasteur confessed at the end of his glorious life. There are in this work true marvels of composition, a science which is continually in agreement with inspiration, and a faculty of directly expressing the thoughts by forms, which makes Besnard a decorator of genius. Some ceilings executed for private houses, and a large panel, *The Happy Island* (Museum of Decorative Arts), help to make this part of his work his strongest claim to fame.

Besnard's decorative work has produced a deep impression among the young painters: it is really a door opened upon the future. But so far it stands alone and unequalled. Attempts have been made to give

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pictorial style to modern scenes, and painters have come forth to fight the battle, among whom I must mention Alfred Roll with his strong compositions of *War*, *The Strike* and *Work*, and a young artist, Jules Adler, who will perhaps develop into a great painter. Nearer to Puvis de Chavannes, but with a curious mixture of impressionism, stands the idealist and lyricist, Henri Martin, who applies Claude Monet's technique to large mural surfaces, with results that are well fitted to show what this application may lead to. These compositions, sometimes nervous and sometimes serene in inspiration, rich in colour and beautifully harmonious in line, count among the finest works of French art of the present day.

Quite different in feeling are the noteworthy compositions of Gaston La Touche, a painter of *fêtes galantes* of variegated colour, fond of reflections and lyrical apparitions; the religious compositions of Maurice Denis who is occupied with pre-Raphaelite ideas and attempts to find anew the divine simplicity of Giotto by means of simplifications and archaisms. This aim sometimes carries him away into questionable exaggeration; but if his drawing is sometimes misshapen and rather quaint than pure, he cannot be denied a very pure feeling for harmonies of colour and the greatest decorative faculty, aided by a sincere piety which bestows upon everything he does a kind of evangelical sweetness.

Apart from everyone else we must place the delightful, fascinating and brilliant Jules Chéret, whom I have already mentioned, and who has developed in his pastels and posters the happiest discoveries of impressionism, connecting these with the tradition of Fragonard, with whom he has much in common, though his qualities are tempered by a thoroughly modern nervousness. Within recent years Chéret has been asked to do some decorations for the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, and for several villas: in these decorations he has revealed himself as a great artist in large works as in small; his fire and spirit are equalled by his science. Far from losing any of the qualities of his pastels he has added to them an admirable poetic impulse, throwing upon the walls, among the fire of the Bengal lights of his beloved *fêtes*, a world of charming beings, Parisian women and characters from the Italian Comedy, whose spontaneous creation gracefully hides a mass of conquered difficulties. It would be vain to try and find ideas in these paintings, but they are



Jules Chéret.

PASTEL.

THE DECORATORS

blossomings of joy and light, which could only have been invented by a Frenchman imbued with the qualities of the eighteenth century; and Chéret's work has, moreover, served to demonstrate in a striking manner, how the direct relationship of impressionism to the national tradition should be understood.

It is known that Chéret's posters and decorations have created in France a whole decorative movement in the art of illustration. Part of this movement, the importance of which is growing day by day, should be attributed to Eugène Grasset, who competes with a Morris, a Crane, and a Beardsley, and to Henri Rivière, who has created a kind of mural poster that unites the qualities of picture, print and decoration, and blends curiously the influence of the Japanese with that of Puvis de Chavannes. And these artists count for no less in the flourishing revival of applied art, of wall-papers, printed textiles and friezes, and even of the architecture of the modern house, which, thanks greatly to the influence of English taste, has received increasing attention in France during the last ten years. This book being entirely devoted to the art of painting, I must, not without great regret, keep my survey of nineteenth-century decorative art within these limits, though I would fain speak of ceramics, glass, metal work, tapestry, textiles, of all these interesting manifestations which the end of the century has raised again to an honoured position, and in which a Gallé, a Thesmar, a Pierre Roche, a Henri Cros, a Bracquemond and a Prouvé have shown themselves to be artists as great as the leading painters. All the arts are of a piece, but it is particularly illogical to separate decorative painting from those forms of art which are its natural corollaries, and which, towards the end of the nineteenth century, have definitely separated themselves from industry to become united with art in the true sense of the word. It has not been one of the least important points in the struggle against prejudice to suppress the unjust lines of demarcation, which went so far as to exclude from the Salons all that was not picture or sculpture, and to make the great public understand the absolute value of this "applied art," which was disdainfully relegated to the sphere of industry. This idea, taken from the Renaissance by the English pre-Raphaelites, has been generously adopted in France, and to-day there can be no longer any doubt, that through it decorative art

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has been saved from etiolation, and enabled again to produce at its pleasure works of the first order, and perhaps to re-establish a new style adapted to the modern spirit, in spite of the invectives of those who used their ingenuity to bar its way by declaring it doomed from the outset. This renaissance has not as yet produced any unassailable works, and, above all, has not yet discovered the secret of cohesion, which alone constitutes a style. It imitates, it hesitates, it succeeds unequally. But the endeavour, which is daily tried by new artists, is sufficiently imposing already to demonstrate, conjointly with the art of book illustration and with Besnard's mural painting, that we have passed beyond the period of realism pure and simple, and beyond that of technique studied for the somewhat sterile joy of virtuosity. This period has been useful and even indispensable. According to Puvis de Chavannes' very true expression: "Impressionist art and its immediate consequences have let daylight into the studio and have cleaned the palette before the hour of work." This hour has arrived: freed from trite formulas, art has sufficiently rejuvenated its vision and its means of expression, to allow us to look to it confidently for a new expression of beauty.



P. Paris de Charvonnay 1824

Pieris de Charvonnay.

THE POOR FISHERMAN.

CONCLUSION.

IN closing this account of French pictorial art in the nineteenth century, I must not omit to fulfil the duty of acknowledging its imperfection. It was no part of my plan to enumerate the names of all the artists who were most worthy of being mentioned. All I had to do was to speak only of the most important among them, in order to devote a few pages to the masters who found in their souls the faculty of adding to the prodigious treasure of preceding centuries. My aim was to throw a rapid glance at the essential points and to note them down, to follow the windings of two or three general ideas across the crowd of temperaments, and I wish I could have fulfilled it better. I have consistently sacrificed the enumeration of individuals to the precise indication of groups. With this intention I have not been afraid of repeating certain formulas and of according their full importance to certain statements, to which criticism, it has seemed to me, has not done sufficient justice. There is no need to defend this book in itself: its faults are those of the author; its qualities are due to the masters of whom he speaks.

I should like, however, to return once more, quite briefly, to the chronological question and to insist upon the inexactness of chronology in matters concerning art. Nothing is more gratifying to minds fond of classification than to divide the evolutions of spirits into very precisely defined periods: nothing could be more false, more opposed to the natural instances which may be drawn from fact. The elementary histories which are compiled for the use of schools and colleges misapply this method. They like to say of a prime minister that on coming into power he had a threefold aim—and as, by the time of his death, he had happened to realize three projects, frequently through the accident of propitious circumstances, they delight in demonstrating the unity of his conduct, and judge his intentions from their results. Art criticism is frequently confined to equally naïve methods. It is easy to imagine the nineteenth

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century in painting as a succession of schools, to fancy the Barbizon School giving way exactly in time to make room for Corot and Millet, or Ingres's School effacing itself before Courbet, and Courbet in his turn retiring to allow the advance of impressionism. It is thus that supers and actors range themselves on the stage. In reality all these "ages" have been simultaneous, and we have created transitions and distances which the men of 1850 did not perceive. There is a chronology in art, which is superior to that of time, and that is the chronology of logic. The art of the nineteenth century arose, palpitating and anxious, out of a mass of pains, efforts, research, doubts, fears and daring, to offer itself to our judgement which it prepared without being aware of it. Thus we ourselves who bemoan the ugliness, the inferiority or the want of style of our age, are nevertheless daily occupied, whether we like it or not, with creating our own beauty, our own style, our own documents, and all that will help posterity to appreciate them. Only in the dim future will the division of our life into periods be thought of, for the convenience of current opinions.

What, then, can be put to the credit of this passionate and restless century? How will it appear in our eyes in relation to the other centuries? More experimental and less perfect—that perhaps will be the verdict. For the nineteenth-century painting was no longer a luxury, nor a mystical expression, nor a sensual feast; it has conceived it as psychologic, suggestive, soberly tragic, more fond of truth than of pleasure, and profoundly sociological. Like criticism, the novel, and the drama, it was the daughter of a democratic epoch that was characterized by the study of ethics and the dislike of all hierarchy. It has substituted the beauty of expression for the dogma of formal beauty; it has been pensive, intense, in closer touch with the other arts, and influenced by music, which has so thoroughly transformed contemporary sensibility. It has retired within itself. It has had its men of power, but it has had above all its men of subtlety and keenness; and more, perhaps, than any other art it has been delivered in pains and it bears the traces of it. I have just said that in art any chronological division is arbitrary and vain; the transition from one century to another takes place unperceived, and there is no precise moment at which the mind undergoes an evolution. Such spirits of the past as Rembrandt, Watteau, Chardin and Dürer, have



Puits de Charannes.

ST. GENEVIÈVE BRINGING FOOD TO PARIS.

CONCLUSION

been, according to Stéphane Mallarmé's beautiful expression, "our suffering comrades." But no doubt this comradeship has never known so profound a solidarity as in this nineteenth century, when the artist, freed of the gilded servitude of hierarchy, which kept him as the most ingenious of servants, has found himself a citizen in spite of the *bourgeoisie*, a revolutionist by instinct, at drawn swords with universal mediocrity, and invested with a great social mission. Free to say what he will on condition of risking poverty and ill success, he has begun by shaking off the burden of the dogmas of the School, just as the new Society shook off that of theocracy. The whole movement of the nineteenth century consists in thus shaking off the past, then in hesitating, and finally in turning resolutely towards the future and searching in itself for new elements, instead of regretting what it has destroyed or contenting itself with dreams.

In the nineteenth century of French painting will be found artists of genius sufficient to render it as illustrious as the preceding centuries, or even more so. Our primitives of the fifteenth century were marvellous, but particularly in sculpture; our painters of the sixteenth were splendid; those of the seventeenth, with the exception of the portrait painters, suffered cruelly from the Fontainebleau School; those of the eighteenth were a burst of wonderful bloom. But in no French century shall we find a more beautiful *ensemble* of portrait painters than that of Ingres, Ricard, Besnard and Carrière; we shall find no greater decorators than Puvis de Chavannes and Besnard; Delacroix remains the grandest and most tragic of all our painters. Names like those of Rousseau, Corot and Monet, make landscape painting as illustrious as the most famous names in the past. Courbet, Daumier, Manet, Degas and Millet have created a new vision of humanity. Renoir and Chéret have found again the secrets of Fragonard and Boucher. The orientalism of Chassériau, Delacroix, Besnard and Decamps is a new acquisition of the century. And so are impressionism and intimism. Monticelli is a not unworthy heir of Watteau. Some fifteen men of genius, four great, fruitful movements, romanticism, realism, impressionism and intimism, a displacement of the pictorial ideal, the creation of illustration, the deliverance from scholastic rule, the invention of an unforeseen technique: that is what the century has brought us, and it is a splendid balance sheet which none of the

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preceding centuries could have presented, except perhaps the eighteenth, which had no lyricism in its ideal, but was surprisingly "modern," intuitive, conventional and melancholically sensual. But the right course is to take no notice of dates, and to connect this century with the second half of our own, which has made every effort to join it through its ideas and technique.

The astonishing effort of the nineteenth century towards freedom, this effort of passionate curiosity which sums it up and will give it its original physiognomy in history, was determined in painting by a sudden discovery, at a moment when it seemed as though everything had been said or foretold: the century is not finished, it finished by beginning a twentieth century in 1875. The crisis which destroyed the second Empire established a new chronology for France. We are now waiting for a new art, and it has been admirably prepared. It has been disencumbered of everything that could have trammelled it. Never, perhaps, has a clearer situation been established. The School has undertaken, more of its voluntary immobility than influenced by the keenest criticism, to limit the action of the dogmas which it had hitherto imposed: it has been to the very extremity of its theories, with a liberty of action which has left them to die of themselves. Realism has expanded and transformed itself into intimism, which has infused psychological elements into it. Even science has been of service to the movement by radically modifying the conditions of the reality of the visible world. It has thus come to pass that we know almost completely whither the various intellectual movements are leading and in what relation they stand to the plastic arts. The transposition of formal beauty into beauty of character has removed an obstacle which had been considered insurmountable: drawing has escaped the narrow limit of line to become a quality of colour, and thus unite with certain elements which seemed to be reserved for poetry and music—symphonic elements. Finally, a decorative style appropriate to modern ideas and aspects has been pointed out and is ready to undergo the painters' reflections and inventions. The people and their works have obtained the freedom of the city of art, into which they have introduced a large series of new motives. The study of atmosphere has renewed the scale of tones. The artist's morality and his social position have followed the logical current of evolution.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore permissible to look forward to an art of painting which will rise in masterly fashion to the intellectual rank of music and letters, without changing its fundamental destination and without being, as the fear was for a moment, an illegitimate compromise between these two arts. Painting is a transposition of reality. If it has ever confined its desire of expression to realism, it has only been from fear of losing foothold and of mistaking its natural resources. The state of things which has been prepared by the nineteenth century working with constant logic under all its apparent fever, will permit it to throw off the trammels of the false allegorical ideal and boldly to search for its ideal in psychology, by penetrating deeper and deeper into the study of the soul revealed through the face. Religious life, sensual life and heroic life had opened for it their domains: it is now preparing to become the interpreter of the *inner life*.

NOTES

I

THE bibliography of French art in the nineteenth century is extensive, and to enumerate it would require a catalogue of considerable size. But the mention of a few authors of significant and excellent works may be of service. "Delacroix's Memoirs," "The Salons," by Théophile Gautier and Burger-Thoré, Paul de Saint Victor's articles and Baudelaire's essays were the prelude of a brilliant outburst of criticism which was profoundly influenced by Taine's ideas. The criticism of the ancient history of art has had some learned representatives, among whom Müntz, Burty, the Goncourts, Castagnary, Delaborde, Séailles, Louis Ménard, André Michel and Ravaissou are the most characteristic, and whose works are preserved in the valuable collection of the "Gazette des Beaux-Arts." The criticism of modern art cannot by any means be said to have had the same merits. M. Roger Marx stands alone in having comprised in it, under the name of the philosophy of art, a synthesis of all the varied movements of the nineteenth century. Next to the considerable series of essays by this critic of the first order we should mention the writings of MM. Gustave Geffroy, Armand Dayot, Alexandre and Huysmans, the all too rare tokens of a criticism above the hurried business of journalism at the Salons and the gratuitous affirmation of transient sympathies or aversions, which has too often formed the standard of writers setting themselves up as art-critics without any preliminary study of the conditions of rational criticism. The anti-artistic organization of the daily press, the insufficiency of the number of seriously conducted art reviews, and the falling off in the sale of volumes of essays in France have all had their bearing on the slight decadence of art-criticism considered as a permanent educational influence for the public. On the other hand, the system of separate biographies of artists has been profusely extended; there can be no doubt that the increasing strength of the desire for synthesis, which is peculiar to our epoch, will some day or other lead to the birth of critics capable of connecting these isolated figures by great, general laws. All the material is ready, and abundant, for summing up the mission, the resources and the style of nineteenth-century art in its relation to the preceding periods.

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II

I have said that chronology is of no great value with regard to anything concerning the parallelism of the art movements of the nineteenth century. Let us recapitulate some of the principal epochs. Ingres and Delacroix, whose influence dominated the beginning of the century, died well within its second half. The growth of the Barbizon School took place between 1830 and 1840, but its principal representatives and immediate pupils produced successful works as late as 1885, that is to say, that they were absolutely co-existent with impressionism. Chassériau was the outcome of Ingres and Delacroix: he died years before them. Manet was a pupil of Couture's and taught M. Jacques Blanche; Daubigny died only eight years before him. Gustave Moreau made a striking *début* about 1862, at the moment when impressionism began to blossom. Under the second Empire Courbet's full success coincided with the success of Cabanel. Ziem, who is still exhibiting, knew Turner and was Ricard's intimate friend. These few instances will suffice to demonstrate that there has been no succession of art movements, but a continuous co-existence, a simultaneous effervescence of academism, romanticism, realism and impressionism. During the seventy years which we have studied in this book, the protagonists of these various movements lived side by side, sympathizing with or fighting against each other, and the transitions took place without anybody being able to perceive them. Even a few works which caused a great commotion, like the *Olympia*, did not produce the impression that they were inaugurating new periods. Their appearance gave rise to polemics which did not go beyond their immediate subject. Let us finally observe that many of these innovating artists only became known after having painted for fifteen or twenty years, as, for instance, Corot. And therefore we should be wrong in considering their first works—first, that is, according to date—as causes of evolution, since they had no influence until much later. The date of a work is the date when it began to serve as an example. There is, therefore, an exact chronology, and an effective chronology; and in art it is the latter alone which counts.

III

A short account of the part played by the State towards the art of painting may not be without value because it has followed the direction indicated by independent art, and this statement corroborates my explanation of the history of the antagonism between the School and free art.

At the beginning of the century and down to 1865 the School placed the centre of the arts in Rome, and the *prix de Rome* was only accessible to the students of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*: this was the summit of a hierarchy, of

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which the studio prizes and competitions were the intermediate steps. The *prix de Rome* was awarded by the members of the Institute, who arranged among themselves to reward their pupils turn and turn about: each studio thus obtained the reward, even if the works sent in for competition did not deserve it. The Institute was equally omnipotent at the Salons. Here too it suppressed the awarding of any prize to exhibitors who were strangers to the School. There was thus a veritable corporative system.

This rigour was only relaxed after 1850, when the power of public opinion forced the jury to admit works which it accepted very much against the grain. It was thus that Manet, until his death in 1883, was sometimes rejected and sometimes admitted, without ever being able to obtain a reward which would have sufficed to exempt him from the preliminary examination that served to discard not only works of too bad a quality, but also those the tendencies of which were regarded with disfavour. Millet was frequently rejected, together with a good many more great artists. Manet was the first to introduce the special and free exhibition, by inviting the public on several occasions to visit his studio. The Emperor Napoleon III. caused a scandal by founding in 1863 the "Salon of the Rejected." The impressionists, excluded from the Salons, rented show-rooms in which they exhibited their works. That was the origin of the custom which is in general use to-day, of small exhibitions which deprive the annual Salon of much of its importance.

The State followed this movement by establishing travelling scholarships to enable young artists to visit the masterpieces of all countries, independently of Rome. A new liberal measure was the creation and serious organization of a gallery of living artists (to-day at the Luxembourg), from which the Louvre was, ten years after the death of the painters, to choose works at its pleasure. The measure was taken in spite of the very strong opposition of the School. This institution was no less vigorously opposed to the creation of a collection of modern foreign works, upon the choice of which it is not consulted by the administration of the *Beaux-Arts*. And recently the admission of the impressionist collection bequeathed to the Luxembourg by Gustave Caillebotte provoked a veritable scandal, which just missed leading to the collective resignation of the professors of the School.

In 1889 the very large and very well hung exhibition of modernist works under the liberal influence of the direction of the *Beaux-Arts*, to which Castagnary, Burty and Roger Marx had given a spirit of independence, foreshadowed the ruin of the prestige of the Salons. And, as a matter of fact, the following year witnessed a schism between the painters, and a second Salon was founded. The State recognized and subsidized it. Urged on by Puvis de Chavannes, Besnard, Rodin and Carrière it rapidly gained so much importance, that the Salon of the Institute had to resign itself to imitating its innovations. The new Salon was opened wide to foreigners, and it suppressed all rewards, retaining only the degrees of associate, member and simple exhibitor. It created a section for applied art and achieved so great a success, that the old Salon in its turn

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had to admit these branches of art, which in 1850 were considered as "mechanical and non-artistic." But it obstinately clings to the principle of medals, which signifies little in the present state of the social mind.

The State divides its purchases, commissions and subventions in about equal shares between the two Salons. In spite of the influence exercised by the Institute, it remains faithful to a policy of impartiality. The School has kept its organization and its mythological competitions which exclude modern thought. But it can no longer hold exclusive sway over artistic production. A French artist may to-day achieve fame without having any connection with the School; formerly this was impossible. Finally, the utility of the Salon is being more and more contested: it is now hardly other than commercial; its artistic importance is lessened by private exhibitions, which are distributed over the whole year. And the utility of the *Ecole de Rome* is even more contested. There is a question of creating similar establishments in Germany, Spain, Holland and England, or of generalizing the system of travelling scholarships, so as to accord to the visit to Rome a period of time proportionate to the other visits.

The examination of these facts thus demonstrates the progress of liberalism, of the democratic spirit, in the relations between art and the State. The meddling of the State with art has, with good reason, been declared dangerous by some excellent minds: it is none the less true that since 1870 it has followed the natural evolution of ethics and obeyed the moral necessities of the artistic situation, as modified by romanticism and by realism. The ideal of the School has not been unjustly destroyed: it has only been limited; whilst formerly, in its nature of a veritable confessional institution, it had the power to consider heretical every conception differing from its own. The State has really grasped its duty of impartiality, by losing its interest in dogmatism and leaving to all movements the task of proving their worth by works which shall all have the right to honour the national art and invite the judgement of the future. The force of circumstances has led us far away from the time when the great Ingres could blame his pupils for taking any heed of the primitives, and tell them angrily: "Gentlemen, if you pass in front of Rubens, take off your hats, but do not look!" To see everything, to become conscious of their ego—that is what the masters did, and that is the reasonable desire of the modern spirit.

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